

Red Door Animal Shelter's

Basic Bunny Care Booklet

We specialize in rabbit education and rescue,
bunny bondings, boarding, and quarterly Spa Days.



Red Door is no-kill animal shelter located at
2410 W. Lunt Chicago, IL 60645
773-764-2242 reddoorshelter.org [@reddoorshelter](https://www.instagram.com/reddoorshelter)

revised May 2022

How much will a pet rabbit cost?

A lot more than you think: on average \$100 per month

Many rabbits are purchased impulsively, especially around Easter. They are high maintenance pets that can live 8-12 years. Are you prepared to make a long term commitment? Who will care for the rabbit when the kids get bored or leave home for college?

Adopting a rabbit is a wiser choice because the rabbit will be spay/neutered, fully vetted, litter box trained, microchipped, and well-socialized.

One time costs: \$225 and up

Adoption fee - \$100 (*fixed and vetted*)

Cage/Exercise pen \$75-200

Litter box - \$10

Water crock \$10

Grooming brush/Nail trimmers -\$20

Cord covers - \$10

Monthly Costs: \$80 and up

Fresh greens - \$50 -75 (*salads 2x a day*)

Timothy hay \$50-100 (*buy in bulk for better price*)

Litter 40lb bag - \$5-20

Digestive Support Supplements - \$10-20

Medicines \$10-100 (*if your bunny has ongoing issues*)

Quarterly costs: \$60 and up

Nail trim/ear cleaning - \$15-30

Toys/boxes/blankets - \$20-40

Baby Gas X - \$10

Laxatone -\$10

Vacation Boarding - \$18-28 per day

Vet costs:

Annual exam - \$50-100 (*elderly rabbits need bi-annual exam*)

Emergency care - \$500-1000+

Spay/neuter surgery - \$200-500 (*if you purchase rather than adopt*)

Annual RHDV2 vaccine -\$50-75

Medicines (*prices will vary with short or long term illness*)



Healthy Bunny Diet

Hay+ Greens + Fresh Water = Healthy Bunny

Rabbits are crepuscular - most active in the morning and early evening - so it's best to feed them salads at breakfast and dinner time. A regular schedule keeps them happy and makes it easier for you to notice any changes in intake and/or output.

Fresh Water

Hydration is VERY important to digestive health. Keep fresh water in a heavy bowl that your rabbit cannot tip over. Avoid water bottles, which require more effort from your rabbit. Clean and refill the bowl daily. Do not add vitamins or supplements, as these can be toxic to your rabbit.



Timothy Hay

Keep your rabbit's litter box filled loosely with timothy hay, which provides essential nutrients and fiber for GI and dental health. Refresh daily or more. For a treat, mix in other hays such as brome grass, orchard grass, or oat hay. Alfalfa hay can be too fattening for rabbits older than 6 months.

Fresh Salad Greens

A variety of thoroughly washed greens provides your rabbit with nutrients and water. The size of the salad differs depending on the size of the rabbit. 1 cup of greens per 2lbs of weight is a good measure. Refer to Red Door's salad list for specific details on which greens to feed and which to avoid.

Digestive Supplements

Rabbits have a delicate digestive system, so we recommend a daily high-fiber "treat" to aid gut motility and promote the growth of good bacteria: *Oxbow's Natural Science Digestive Support*. Also offer *Oxbow's Papaya Support* during shedding season.



Pelleted Food

Pelleted food was the original "rabbit chow" used to breed/grow rabbits for meat or fur. While alfalfa pellets are important for a baby bunny's growth, after 1 year of age, timothy pellets should only be given as a treat (1tsp- 1tbsp per day). **Pellets should contain at least 17% fiber.** AVOID any "fiesta" mixes that contain seeds, corn, wheat dried fruit or dyed kibble, as it can cause obesity and fatal digestive problems.



These are the brands we recommend:

Oxbow, Small Pet Select, Sherwood,
Supreme Science Selective



Food Guide Pyramid

Breakfast/dinner salad:

Alfalfa sprouts, Arugula
 Basil, Beet Greens
 Bibb, Boston,
 Butter Lettuce
 Camomile,
 Celery Leaves,
 Chicory, Cilantro, Clover
 Dill, Dandelion Greens
 Endive, Escarole
 Fennel, Frisee,
 Green Leaf Lettuce
 Italian/Flat Parsley
 Lavender, Mint, Oregano
 Radicchio, Rosemary
 Red Leaf Lettuce
 Romaine Lettuce, Sage,
 Sorrel, Spring Mix, Thyme
 Watercress, Wheat grass



Digestive Supplements:

Oxbow Digestive Support
 Oxbow Papaya Support
 Laxatone when shedding
 (maple or malt flavor)



**FRESH
WATER**

**5%
Healthy
Treats**



Limited Treats:

Fresh Herbs
 1 tsp Timothy Pellets
 Timothy Hay Blocks
 Apple/Pear Branches
 Pet Grass/Botanical Hays
 Baby Carrot/Small piece of Fruit
 Oxbow Simple Rewards
 Rose Hips/Chammomile

**5%
Supplements**

Oxbow Digestive/Papaya Support

Feed Sparingly due to high oxalate/calcium:

Curly Parsley
 Chard
 Collard Greens
 Carrot Tops
 Mustard Greens
 Turnip Greens
 Spinach
 Kale

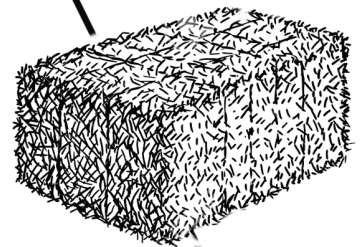
**10%
Salad Greens**

Thoroughly washed

Recommended Brands:

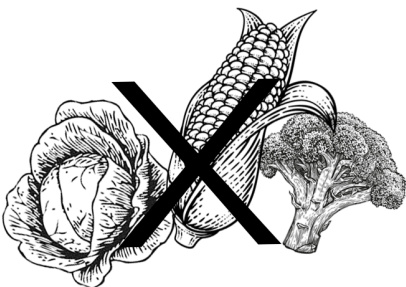
Oxbow Animal Health
 Sherwood Pet Health
 Science Selective
 Small Pet Select

**80%
Unlimited
Timothy Hay
or Orchard Grass**



NEVER FEED:

Fiesta mix pellets with seeds or colored kibble,
 Iceberg Lettuce, Cabbage, Beans, Seeds, Nuts, Broccoli, Cauliflower,
 Chocolate, Candy, Cookies, Wheat, Corn, Potato, Tomato, Avocado,
 Yogurt Drops, Dried Fruit, any store-bought treats with artificial dyes



Daily Rabbit Health Check

As prey animals, rabbits tend to hide pain and illness. Be vigilant and know how to spot warning signs. If you see any of these symptoms, call your exotic vet immediately!

Lack of appetite or refusing favorite treat means something is in pain or discomfort.

Lethargic, unresponsive or sitting in hunched-over position - could be gas or other pain

Restlessness or stretched out in unusual positions may indicate gas in the GI tract.

Coughing, sneezing or wheezing may indicate upper/lower respiratory infection.

Discharge from eyes or nose may indicate respiratory infection or dental issue.

Labored or rapid breathing could indicate a variety of illness.

Loud tooth grinding may indicate pain.

Scabs, bald spots, excessive scratching or flaky skin indicates fur mites.

Head tilt, loss of balance, rolling on floor indicates a serious neurological condition.

Overgrown teeth, drooling, or lumps along the jaw indicates serious dental issues.

Feet are red, swollen or bleeding indicates hock sores caused by rough flooring.

Bloated, hard or doughy stomach or sides sucked in could indicate gas or GI stasis.

Rapid weight loss is an indication of intestinal parasites or possibly cancer.

Unusual poops that are watery, misshapen or strung with fur indicates serious GI issue.

Excessive thirst could indicate a kidney, bladder or liver issue.

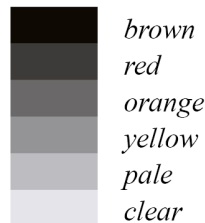


Normal poops are dry, odorless and plentiful. They may range in color from light to dark



Small, misshapen poops means bunny is not eating enough hay and may have dental pain. Fiber is essential for gut and dental health.

Rabbit urine will vary in color depending on diet and hydration



brown
red
orange
yellow
pale
clear

If you see white chalky build up in the urine, it could be calcium sludge. Call your vet!



Cecotropes have a strong musky odor. Bun needs to reingest these for good GI health. If you see these, call your exotic vet. Probiotics may be needed.



Poops strung with fur means bunny needs help passing ingested fur with a supplement called laxatone. You are most likely to see this during shedding.

Common Rabbit Health Issues

Basic Rabbit Vitals:

Heart Rate (relaxed): 130-325 beats per minute
Respiratory Rate (relaxed): 30-60 breathes per minute
Temperature 101-104 F (38-40 C)

Many rabbit diseases have similar symptoms. When in doubt, consult your exotic vet.

GI Stasis - This is a very serious condition where the rabbit's digestive system shuts down. Your bunny will not eat or poop, and harmful bacteria and gases build up in the GI tract. This is a very painful condition and can be **fatal if not resolved within 24 hours**. There are a number of situations that can bring on GI stasis such as: dental pain, contaminated produce, fur balls, gas or stress. If your bunny does not eat his salad or refuses a treat, **call your exotic vet immediately**.

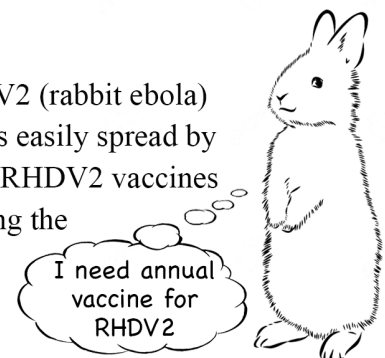
Dental Disease - Some rabbits are genetically prone to dental issues. Some develop dental disease due to poor diet. Without sufficient fiber to keep teeth worn down, tiny spurs will grow on the molars, causing pain when eating. These points can be easily filed down with a vet visit. Regular filings will vary from 30 days to 6 months, depending on the rabbit. Signs that your rabbit may have a dental issue are drooling, weepy eyes, lack of appetite, or smaller than normal poops, indicating that he is not eating as much hay as usual.

E. cuniculi - This is a very complex disease caused by a protozoan parasite that is either ingested or passed from mother to baby. It can remain dormant for the entire life span or it may become an active infection. *E.C.* usually affects the brain, liver, kidneys, or eyes. Consult with your exotic vet at the first sign of any of these symptoms: partial or complete paralysis, loss of coordination, seizures, rolling, urinary incontinence, head tilt, unusual eye movements or any spots in the eye.

Respiratory Disease- Sneezing, wheezing or nasal/eye discharge can be signs of Upper Respiratory Infection, which can be caused by bacteria such as bordetella, staphylococcus, pseudomonas, MRSA or pasteurilla - collectively known as "snuffles." Lower Respiratory Infections, such as pneumonia, occur in the lungs, may not have obvious symptoms. If your rabbit has rapid breathing in a rested state (more than 30-60 breaths per minute, or if he stretches his neck to breathe through the mouth, please contact your vet. Respiratory problems can also be triggered by non-bacterial factors such as cigarette smoke, allergies, nasal blockages (tumors, inhaled hay/pellets), dental issues or lesions from rabbit syphilis.

Heart Disease - Due to over-breeding and malnutrition, we are seeing more heart disease in rabbits. Arrhythmias, high blood pressure and congestive heart failure can be controlled with daily medications, allowing your bunny to live a happy life. Many rabbits have lived for years after a heart disease diagnosis. If your bunny is over 5 years of age, has shallow or rapid breathing, is lethargic, or has respiratory symptoms, please consult your exotic vet for diagnostic testing.

RHDV2 - The highly contagious and deadly rabbit disease known as RHDV2 (rabbit ebola) is spreading across the U.S. affecting wild and domestic rabbits. The virus is easily spread by birds and insects, so outdoor playtime is **NOT** safe for your rabbit. Annual RHDV2 vaccines are a must to keep your rabbit safe. Keep current on virus updates by visiting the National House Rabbit Society website at www.rabbit.org



Common Rabbit Health Issues *cont.*

Abscesses - When a rabbit suffers an injury such a deep wound or an infected tooth, an abscess will form around the area and create a pocket of pus. Unlike most mammals, rabbits have very thick pus that cannot drain, so the abscess must be surgically removed. Regularly check your bunny for swellings or bumps. Pay close attention to the jaw area. If you feel anything unusual, **call your exotic vet immediately.**

Ear Infection - Rabbits can develop a build up of wax and debris inside the ear canal. Ears should be cleaned every 2-3 months. Lop rabbits need their ears cleaned more frequently, because heat and moisture get trapped inside the ear canal. If your rabbit shakes his head a lot, scratches at the ears frequently or if upright ears fall down, this is a sign of ear infection. If left untreated, it can develop into a more serious condition.

Obesity - You should never have to worry about your rabbit being overweight if you are feeding a proper diet and providing plenty of exercise. Pelleted foods are designed to fatten up animals quickly, so limit timothy pellets to treat portions of 1 teaspoon or less a day. Alfalfa and oat hays can also lead to obesity.

Hock Sores - Some rabbits will develop calluses on the bottoms of the hind feet. These calluses can break open and get infected. Provide soft bedding such as Care Fresh bedding or a soft towel or blanket. Periodically check your bunny's feet by pushing the fur aside. Administer **A&D ointment** to any indication of a callus. If the sore is inflamed, pus-filled or split open, **call your exotic vet.**

Fur Mites - If you see flaky skin or bald patches on your bunny, it is most likely Cheyletiella, commonly known as fur mites. These are microscopic mites can be easily treated by your vet. **Do not apply any type of dog or cat flea/tick products, as they may be fatal to your bunny.**

Rabbit First Aid Kit:



Infant GasX (simethicone) - When a rabbit refuses to eat, and changes positions as if he is uncomfortable, he may have a gas bubble. **Give 1cc/ml every hour, not to exceed 3 doses.** If you see no improvement, call your exotic vet immediately. Infant Simethicone can be purchased over the counter at any drugstore.

Styptic powder - to stop blood flow if a nail is broken or cut too short. Do not use on skin wounds.

A&D Ointment - help sooth callus and hock sores on the bottom of rabbit's feet.

Laxatone - helps to pass fur balls. When stringy poops are spotted, give 1/2 teaspoon daily for 3 days, then 2-3 times per week for the next 2 weeks. Be sure to get maple or malt flavor, not tuna flavor.

Oxbow Critical Care® - a premium recovery food which can be given to herbivores that are unwilling to eat their normal diet due to illness, surgery or poor nutritional status. This specially formulated product contains all the essential nutrients of a complete diet as well as high-fiber timothy hay to ensure proper gut physiology and digestion. It can only be purchased through your vet, who will advise you on how to administer it.

Syringes - these are critical tools for first aid. 60ml feeding syringes work best with Critical Care and 1.0ml/cc syringes are perfect for administering simethicone. These can purchased from your exotic vet.

Litter Box FAQ's

Your rabbit will keep himself clean, but it is your responsibility to provide a clean, safe litter and to refresh the hay at least once a day. The most important step in litter training your bunny is to get her/him spayed/neutered. An unfixated rabbit will naturally want to mark territory with urine and poops. To a fixed rabbit, a litter box is like home: a place to sleep, eat, play and make waste. It's not surprising that some people are a little concerned about this, but don't worry! With your help, bunny's box will be clean and safe.

1. What kind of litter box should I get for my rabbit? A large cat litter box is perfect for small to medium sized rabbits. A large rabbit or bonded pair may require an extra large box or even a mortar-mixing tub from the hardware store. We do not recommend corner litter boxes because they are too small for most rabbits. Boxes with grids or screens are also not recommended because a bunny can easily get a nail or toe caught.

2. What do I put in my rabbit's litter box? To absorb urine and odors, line the bottom of the box with 1-2" of a rabbit-safe litter listed below. Put a large handful of Timothy hay on one side of the box and refresh the hay daily. This will encourage your bunny to eat and do his business at the same time.

Safe Litters:

*Feline or Equine Pine, Wood fuel pellets
Critter Country, Oxbow Eco-straw
Yesterday's News, PaPurr or Carefresh
Plain newspapers*

Unsafe Litters:

*Clay or clumping cat litter (can cause blockages)
Pine or Cedar shavings (liver and respiratory damage)
Oat/Alfalfa based litters (can cause weight gain)
Corn cob litters or Wheat Scoop (can cause blockages)*

3. What if my bunny eats his litter? As long as you are using a safe litter, made of wood or paper, it will pass through your rabbit's system as fiber. Unsafe litters can cause weight gain, upset stomach, liver damage or intestinal blockages. These are life-threatening conditions!

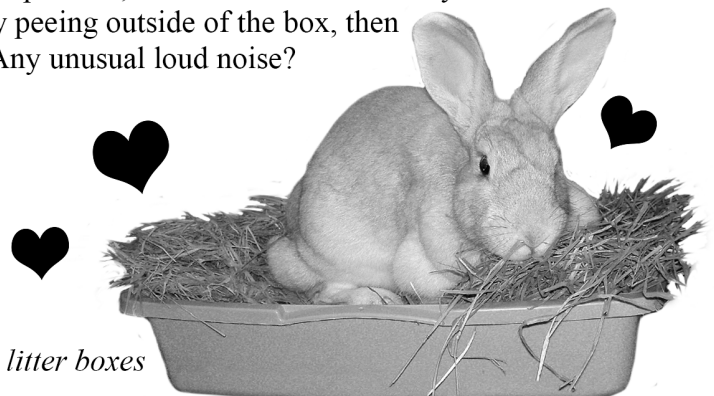
4. How often do I clean my rabbit's litter box? Every 2-3 days depending on the size of your rabbit. Wipe down with a **1:10 vinegar and water solution** and rinse with hot water. **NEVER** use household cleaners such as bleach or detergent, as they are toxic to rabbits.

5. What if my bunny kicks his litter out of his box? Rabbits are natural diggers, and from time to time they may decide that their litter box is an excellent place to excavate. One solution is to put the litter box in a plastic storage bin with an opening cut in one side, or provide a "diggy box."

6. What if my rabbit poops outside the box? Expect a few poops outside the box to mark territory, especially in the first week of bunny's arrival to his new home. Just sweep up the pellets and put them in the box. Older buns with arthritis may find it difficult to jump into their box, so a low sided box is recommended.

7. What about urine outside of the box? If you see small puddles, it could indicate a urinary infection. Call your exotic vet immediately! If your bunny is deliberately peeing outside of the box, then he is upset about some change. Maybe his box is dirty? Any unusual loud noise? Do you have guests over?

**Email us for advice at:
info@reddoorshelter.org**



Rabbits love their litter boxes

Rabbit Habitat

Your rabbit needs 2-4 hours of supervised playtime each day, but when you are away, a safe enclosure is ideal unless you have thoroughly bunny-proofed your entire home.



Exercise pens(36”H), clear plastic play pens, or DIY storage cubes make great habitats.



Rabbitat must meet these basic criteria:

- Area must be at least 4-6 times the size of the bunny to allow for stretching
- Smooth or carpeted floors to prevent hock sores and broken nails/toes
- Moderate temperature below 80 degrees with access to sunlight
- A place to hide (box, castle, tunnel), chew toys, blankets
- Large rectangle litter box with unlimited timothy hay
- Fresh water in a heavy or non-skid bowl.

Bunnyproofing your home:

- Cover all exposed wires, cables and cords with hard plastic protectors.
- Block access to any baseboards with lead paint or wallpapers with glue.
- Remove or relocate all houseplants, as most are toxic to rabbits.
- Block off dangerous areas such as stairs and major appliances.
- Keep important books, papers, shoes and remote controls off the floor.



DO NOT TAKE YOUR RABBITS OUTSIDE

Red Door strongly believes that all domestic rabbits should be kept **INSIDE!**
Outside dangers include: **predators, pesticides, poisonous plants, parasites,**
and the deadly RHDV2 virus. Get your rabbits vaccinated!

Rabbit Handling

Pet me! Rabbits are very social animals and they love the comforting touch of humans or other rabbits. If your bunny gives you a nose bump, a gentle nip, or digs his paws on your legs, he may be telling you he wants your undivided attention. Most rabbits enjoy a good nose rub, gentle stroking of the ears or cheeks, and long pets from head to toe. Each bunny has a different sweet spot and may also have areas where he doesn't like to be touched, so get to know your bunny and he may reward you with a lick or two, or even some tooth purring.

Don't pick me up! As prey animals rabbits are naturally fearful of heights and feel safer with all four feet on the ground. When you pick them up they may think you are a predator such as a hawk or coyote trying to carry them away for a meal. So it's normal for bunny to react in fear by squirming, scratching, grunting or even biting. This can result in serious injury such as a twisted spine or broken bones if the bunny is dropped.

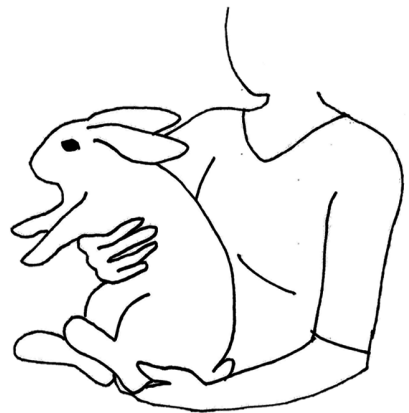
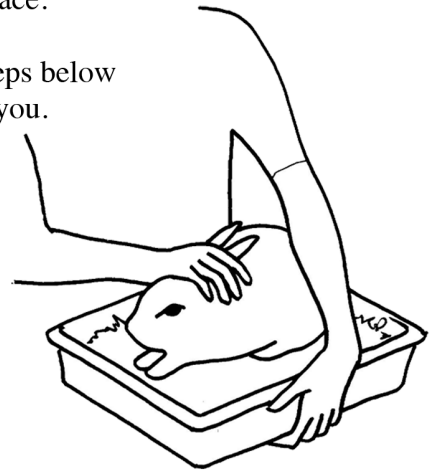
At Red Door, our rabbits are trained to be carried in their litter box, where they feel safe.

This is the safest and easiest way to transport your bunny from place to place.

If you want to learn how to properly pick up a rabbit, please follow the steps below and practice daily. With time and patience, your bunny will learn to trust you.

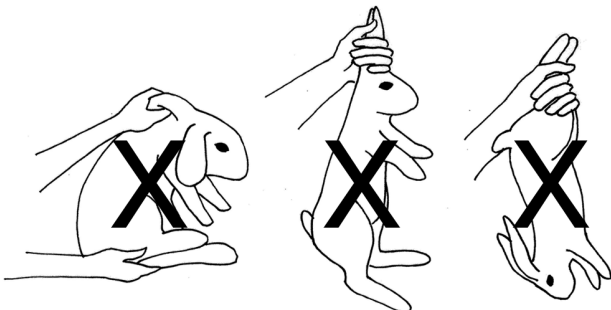
Offer healthy treats as a reward.

1. Approach your rabbit slowly, sit on the floor and pet him gently.
2. Gently put one hand under the rabbit's chest and use your other hand to "scoop up" and support the hind legs.
3. Bring the rabbit close to your body and hold it's back securely against your chest.
4. SLOWLY stand up, holding the rabbit gently, but firmly.
5. Carry the rabbit short distances only. Use a carrying case or the litter box for longer distances.
6. To put the rabbit down, SLOWLY bend your knees to lower yourself to the ground.
7. Be very careful when releasing the rabbit, as they tend to squirm as you get closer to the ground.
8. Offer your bunny a healthy treat for a job well-done!



Never pick up a rabbit like this:

Scruffing a rabbit or picking up by the ears or legs can result in serious injury or death.



Rabbits feel safest on the ground. If you must pick up, support the hind legs!

Grooming your Rabbit

Rabbits are fastidious groomers, and will keep themselves clean, but they will need a little help from their human friends. While brushing a bunny is easy, nails trims or ear cleaning can be difficult for inexperienced rabbit handlers, so let the experts at Red Door assist.

We host quarterly **Spa-Di-Da-Days** every January, April, July, and October to coincide with shedding seasons. We offer grooming, nails trims, ear cleaning, scent gland cleaning and our fun-themed photos. If you can't make it to a spa day, nail trims and ear cleaning can also be done by appointment. Please call the shelter to check availability - 773-764-2242.

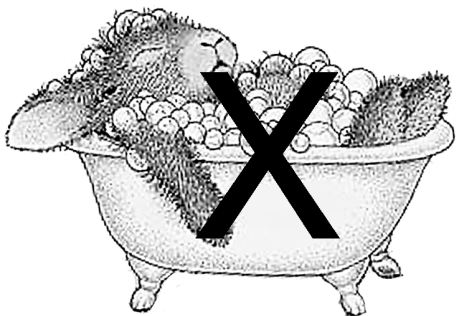
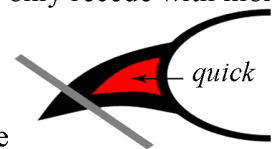
FUR - Your rabbits will shed every 3 months with the change of seasons, alternating between heavy and light fur loss. She will be constantly grooming, and ingesting fur. But rabbits do not have a vomit reflex and cannot cough up fur balls like cats do. Therefore it's your job to **brush your bunny weekly-daily if they are shedding** or have angora fur, which can easily tangle into painful mats. Due to the delicate nature of rabbit skin, use extreme caution if you must use scissors to remove mats. Serious matting must be shaved off by an exotic vet.

The best tool to use for fur removal is a **cat slicker brush** or the Furminator. Both tools will help to remove the loose undercoat. Also try **sticky rollers, grooming mitts**, or run wet hands down the length of bunny's body. Gently pull out small tufts of fur - be very careful not to pull on bunny's delicate skin.

EARS - Although your rabbit can clean the outside of his ears, wax and debris can still build up deep in the ear canal. This can lead to an infection, especially for lop-eared rabbits, whose ear canals are dark and moist. Check in your rabbit's ears monthly to see if there is any visible wax or foul odor. Have bunny's ears cleaned every 3-6 months by a professional. Consult your exotic vet or call Red Door for an appointment.

NAILS - Rabbits need regular trims every 2-3 months, and it can be a difficult job for new rabbit owners. Long nails will make it painful for your bunny to walk, and they can tear off if snagged, leaving your bunny with a bloody paw. As nails grow, so do the veins, or "quicks." Quicks that are too long will only recede with more frequent nail trims.

Using sharp clippers, cut the nails at a 45 degree angle, about 1/8 inch away from the quick. For dark colored nails use a mini flashlight to illuminate the nail so can see where the quick ends. Emery boards can be used to file rough edges. Have styptic powder on hand in case you accidentally cut into the quick. Gently press the powder on the nail tip and apply pressure to stop the blood flow.



NEVER give a rabbit a bath!

Giving a bunny a bath in water can be extremely stressful and could lead to shock or hypothermia. If necessary, use a wet washcloth to spot clean your rabbit. Do not use any human shampoo or "bunny shampoo" that you see at the pet store. These could be toxic.

If you have questions about your bunny's hygiene please contact us at Red Door:

773.764.2242

info@reddoorshelter.org

Rabbit Body Language

Binkying - Happy happy joy joy! I'm so happy I want to dance!

Bobbing of head - My eyes have poor depth of field and this is how I judge distance.

Boxing - Leave me alone and don't touch my stuff!

Butt up while sitting - I'm too lazy to go to the litter box. I'll just pee here.

Chinning - You're mine now that I've marked you with my odorless scent gland.

Circling - I am enamored with you, let's play!

Ears forward - Shhhhh! I heard something. Was that the refrigerator opening?

Ears back, body flat to ground- I'm scared and trying to look invisible.

Ears back, tail up - I'm scared and may attack if I feel threatened.

Flopping - I'm not having a seizure, I'm just chillin'.

Fur Pulling, Carrying Hay in Mouth - I'm pregnant or at least I think I am.

Grunting, Honking - Watch out, I'm angry. Or maybe I just felt like talking to you.

Lying flat with legs out - Ahhhhh, life is good.

Lying in an unusual position or sides sucked in - My tummy is gassy and hurts.

Licking - You are my master, so I will groom you now.

Lunging - I'm warning you! Back off!

Mounting - I am the boss of you. Or maybe I'm just feeling frisky.

Nipping - I don't like what you're doing, pay attention to me, move out of my way.

Nose Nudging - I want you to pet me or I want you to move out of my way.

Periscoping - Standing up allows me to survey my vast kingdom.

Screaming - HELP! I'm in intense pain or scared to death.

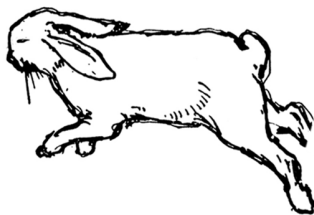
Thumping - I sense danger and must warn everyone! I don't like what you just did.

Tooth Grinding - My teeth hurt real bad, please take me to the vet.

Tooth Purring - Quietly chattering my teeth means I'm very content.



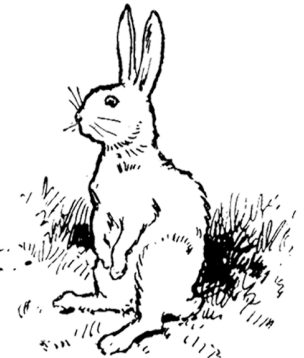
*Binkying:
Whoop Hoo!*



*Flopping:
Zzzzzzzzzzz*



*Ears back, tail up:
Watch out!*



*Periscoping!
What's that over there?*

Finding Your Bunny a Friend

Rabbits are very social creatures and are usually happier and healthier with a bunny companion. A bonded pair of rabbits can entertain and comfort each other during the day, while you are at work. If you are considering a friend for your bunny, be aware that **it is up to your rabbit to choose his mate, not you**. Like humans, rabbits are very particular about who they associate with.

At Red Door, we specialize in bunny bondings by using the “speed-dating” method. We will introduce your bunny to all available rabbits and observe their interactions to give you our best recommendations for a companion. Keep in mind that the bonding process does take patience and time- anywhere from 2 days to 2 months. Your Red Door bonding counselor will offer advice, as well as tips and tricks to get them together.

1. All rabbits must be **spay/neutered at least 1 month** prior to their first date. Otherwise they will be controlled by their hormones. Fixed males can still have viable sperm up to a month after neuter surgery.
2. **Opposite sex bondings work best**, although some males will accept another male friend. Female rabbits are territorial by nature, so we do not recommend introducing 2 females, even if they are both spayed.
3. **“Speed dating”** is great way to introduce your bunny to potential mates. At Red Door, we use an introduction screen to separate the rabbits when they first meet, in case of hate at first sight. It may take up to 3 visits to the shelter before your bunny chooses a friend.
4. Let our bonding experts assess the behaviors of your rabbit and his dates. We **look for positive signs** such as indifference, grooming, eating together, non-aggressive mounting and relaxed body language. It is important to know when to **intervene when aggressive behaviors arise**.
5. At home, you must set up 2 **separate areas** for each rabbit. They should be able to see and smell each other, but not close enough to bite through their cages. You will **swap their litter boxes** and living spaces each day as they can get accustomed to each other’s scents. There will be poop wars!
6. **Neutral territory is a must for dates at home!** Once you bring a second bunny home, the dates must continue in an area that has not been marked by your bunny - we suggest the bathtub or the back seat of a car.
7. **End each date on a positive note**. If the bunnies get too frisky or aggressive, calm them down and then end the date. Be mindful of circling and chasing, as it can escalate very quickly.
8. **Extend the time of each dating session**. Once the buns can be together without any spats, try leaving them alone for several hours, then overnight.
9. **Remain calm and patient** throughout the process, or the rabbits will pick up on your anxiety. Expect a few road blocks - we always say: “two steps forward and one step back.”

It takes time and patience, but in the end, there is nothing sweeter than 2 buns in love.

