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Housing

Inside or Outside

Rabbits can be kept indoors, outdoors, or both indoors and outdoors. Wherever you keep your rabbits, make sure that all of their basic needs are met, and that you spend plenty of time with them to socialize them to humans. Indoor rabbits should have a cage (see later) that serves as their warren (den). Outdoor rabbits should have a hutch that is elevated off the ground and provides access to the yard to provide adequate space for exercise and grazing. The enclosure should provide protection from the elements, as well as from predators. All rabbits should have access to water, hay/grass, and shelter at all times.

Temperature

Rabbits fare better in cold weather than in hot weather. They can quickly and easily die of heatstroke when temperatures spike. Therefore, your rabbits' environment should be kept within 40° F to 85° F. Rabbits should always have access to shade and shelter. If your rabbits are outside, you should bring them inside when the weather is too hot or freezing.

Company

Rabbits are social animals. Therefore, if possible, get two rabbits instead of one. Male-female pairs get along better than same-sex pairs. Both rabbits should be neutered/spayed to prevent unwanted offspring and behavior and health problems.

Space

Rabbits need large amounts of space to play, explore, and exercise. Your indoor rabbits should have a designated area in which to roam for a few hours or longer every day. Start by blocking off a small rabbit-proofed area for them to explore. Once they learn what is acceptable to chew on and where it is acceptable to urinate and defecate, you can gradually expand their territory. Supervise your rabbits whenever they are allowed access to new areas.

Rabbit-Proofing

Because of your rabbits' endless curiosity, ability to squeeze into small spaces, and tendency to explore their world with their teeth, rabbit-proofing your home can be challenging. First, identify all of the potential chewing and digging targets in the area. Crouch down to look at the room from your rabbits' perspective. They will likely chew on wooden objects (baseboards, walls, furniture legs, etc.), plants, and electrical cords. However, they may also chew on plastic, metallic, or cloth

Information cited from:

Mayer, J and Donnelly, T., eds. Clinical Veterinary Advisor: Birds and Exotic
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items. They will likely dig on loose carpet edges, rugs, and pillows. If possible, remove all potential targets from your rabbits' reach. Conceal electrical cords underneath carpets, behind furniture, or within PVC piping. Keep plants out of reach because they can be toxic. Place heavy objects on carpet edges. Barricade your rabbits from unacceptable or dangerous things that cannot be removed from their area. Place boxes or barricades around furniture so your rabbits cannot crawl underneath or behind them. Make sure your rabbits always have access to acceptable chew toys. Your rabbits always should have access to at least one litter box. If they are allowed to roam a large area, you may want to provide several boxes.

Cage

- *Safe place.* The cage is a rabbit's safe place and should always be associated with good things. Never punish your rabbits while they are inside their cage or use their cage as punishment. (Punishment altogether is discouraged.)
- *Location.* To make it more secure, place it in a low-traffic area against a wall or a corner.
- *Material.* Secure wire cages are the best. Do not use glass aquariums because they are not well ventilated.
- *Cage bottom.* Because your rabbits do not have footpads like a dog, they easily get sores on the bottoms of their feet. So the cage bottom needs to be solid, preferably plastic because it is easy to clean.
- *Size.* Your rabbits need enough room to have separate eating, sleeping, and toileting areas. Multiple-story cages are good for this because they offer a reasonable amount of space on a smaller base area. The cage should be at least big enough to allow your rabbits to make four hops, and tall enough that they can stand up. The bigger the cage, the better!
 - *Most rabbit cages sold in pet stores are much too small for your rabbits.* You may want to consider building your own cage for your rabbits. Several blueprints are available online.
- *Layout.* The following should be placed in the cage: litter box, hide box, food bowl, hay rack or box, and water bottle or bowl. The litter box should be placed in a corner (usually your rabbits will choose one corner for elimination). It can be any shape as long it is big enough. Boxes with tall sides are great for preventing your rabbits from urinating outside of them. Paper-based litter products are best because your rabbits will consume their litter. Bedding can consist of paper-based litter or a towel. Putting the pellets in a bowl and the hay in a container will keep the cage cleaner.

Toys

- Rabbits need toys to stimulate their minds, to provide an outlet for natural chewing and digging behaviors, and to maintain their overall health. At first, provide a variety of toys to see which ones are preferred. Ensure that none of the toys have been treated with chemicals or are made with toxic inks, dyes, etc. Always supervise your rabbits to make sure that they do not swallow indigestible pieces that may become stuck in their intestines.
 - *Sisal toys.* These come in all shapes and sizes, from mats to baskets to carrot-shaped toys. They are great for safely satisfying your rabbit's natural chewing tendencies.
 - *Wooden toys.* These come in a large variety of shapes and sizes. Your rabbits probably will like toys made out of apple or peach wood.
 - *Cardboard.* Toilet paper or paper towel rolls and cereal or packing boxes are perfect (and cheap) toys. Make them more interesting by stuffing them with vegetables, hay, or paper.
 - *Paper wads and paper bags.* These also make great edible toys.
 - *Phonebooks.* Those made with nontoxic materials (such as soy-based inks) are great toys.

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- *Food dispensing toys.* These are great for motivating your rabbits to work for their food and exercise simultaneously. A hollow ball filled with pellets will dispense food as your rabbits roll it around. A hollow wire ball stuffed with vegetables will exercise their mind and body.
- *Cardboard or plastic tunnels.* Your rabbits will instinctively crawl into tunnels. Make sure the tunnel is large enough that they do not get stuck.
- *Towels, bed sheets, pillow cases.* Your rabbits will enjoy digging on these or tunneling underneath them.
- *Tossing toys.* Rabbits naturally like to toss small objects, especially if they make sounds.

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