

Against All Odds Rabbit Rescue

Rabbit Care Package



Congratulations on the adoption of your new family member! Rabbits make wonderful pets. They live on average between 8-10 years (Although it is not unheard of to have some get even to 18 years old), can be litter box trained, learn tricks and much more!

In this we will go over important tips on how to feed and care for your new family member! For any further questions, feel free to email or call! We want to make sure you and your bunny are set up for success, we will do all that we can to help!

Diet



The most important part of a rabbit's health starts with its diet. Digestion is extremely important and an inappropriate diet can lead to a condition called Gastrointestinal Stasis, which is a slowing of their gut and if not treated promptly, can easily kill a rabbit in 24 hours. Making sure your rabbit has a high fiber diet and is getting all the nutrition it needs is high priority.

Your rabbit is currently on Oxbow Adult rabbit pellets. They receive $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of pellets a day, which is done best if you split it into two feedings (Morning and night), so they receive $\frac{1}{8}$ cup twice a day. This will encourage them to eat more hay and thus, be a healthier bunny. Hay is very important for keeping their teeth healthy as well as providing fiber for a healthy digestive tract.

You do not want to use pellets that are alfalfa based or have a seed mix in them. They will lead to obesity and are not a healthy mix since rabbits are not naturally seed eaters but grazers off of plants and grasses. Rabbits also have a tendency when given the choice, pick out the colorful/flavorful pieces and leave behind the pellets that they need for nutrition, which causes their diet to be lacking in essential nutrients.



Please note these veggies were split between two rabbits.

It would be best for them to be provided with some fresh vegetables each day so they provide with him with additional moisture and nutrients. The vegetables that your rabbit is used to and are healthy for them are,

Romaine Lettuce

Cilantro

Carrot Tops

Basil

Dill

Oregano

Greenleaf Lettuce

Parsley

Mint leaves

Dandelion leaves

Thyme

Arugula

Wheatgrass (Cheap and easy to grow on your own, as well as very healthy!)

A very good way to provide your rabbit with a good, healthy variety of greens is to just buy one of the “Spring Mix” containers and give them a handful a day. The veggies inside are all healthy and that way, he gets a variety to choose from. Sometimes, depending on the season, there can be a fair bit of spinach so just watch and make sure they do not get too much of that. It is high in calcium and if a rabbit has too much calcium in their diet, it can lead to the formation of bladder stones and bladder sludge.

As a treat, your rabbit can receive a small slice of fruit 3-4 times a week. These are high in sugar, however, and must be fed in moderation. Remember that your rabbit isn't very big so pretty much anything you give them will be enough.

Banana

Strawberry

Cranberry

Pineapple

Apple

Blueberry

Papaya

Blackberries

Here's a good chart to show how your rabbit should be eating!



Your rabbit should be receiving unlimited hay. There is no such thing as too much, so they should have a constant supply! Nearly any hay is acceptable as long as it is NOT Alfalfa (Young rabbits can have alfalfa hay until about 6 months) and does not contain a seed/yogurt drop mix. Also be sure to check and make sure that any hay you are getting is not moldy (It will appear to be white, grey or black, off color. Anything that looks strange, do not feed) or too dusty. Poor quality/moldy hay can lead to respiratory problems, GI Stasis and death.

The recommended kinds of hay are,

Timothy	Orchard Grass
Meadow Grass	Botanical

A lot of the things that pet stores sell are bad for rabbits and are unsuitable for their digestive tract. Along the same thread, there are veggies/fruits that should not be fed to your rabbit as they can cause gas or other problems.

Do **NOT** feed,

Yogurt drops	Seed “treat” sticks
Cabbage	Iceburg Lettuce
Cauliflower	Parsnips
Tomato Leaves	Potato
Bread	Dog/Cat Food
Nuts	

Some pet stores will try to sell Salt Licks, Mineral Blocks or Vitamin Supplements added to water. These are not necessary for your rabbit’s health as they will get everything they needs from pellets and veggies.

Toys and Entertainment



Rabbits are very busy, active and intelligent animals. They are also natural burrowers and foragers, so they will have the strong instinct to dig and chew. If they do not have the proper stimulation, this can easily lead to destructive behavior.

Toys have to be tailored to each individual rabbit. Some rabbits do really well with cardboard, while others will eat it and it has to be taken away to prevent a blockage. Always remember to watch your rabbit when introducing a new toy! Make sure they aren't ingesting it as it can cause problems such as blockages, choking, getting it wrapped around them, etc. Always try to look at a toy and see potential problems it can cause, some of these activities and toys are only for when rabbits are supervised!



Some of the popular favorites with rabbits include,

Apple sticks

Cat tunnels

Ikea Duktig Beds

Plastic baby rings and toy keys

Balled up newspaper

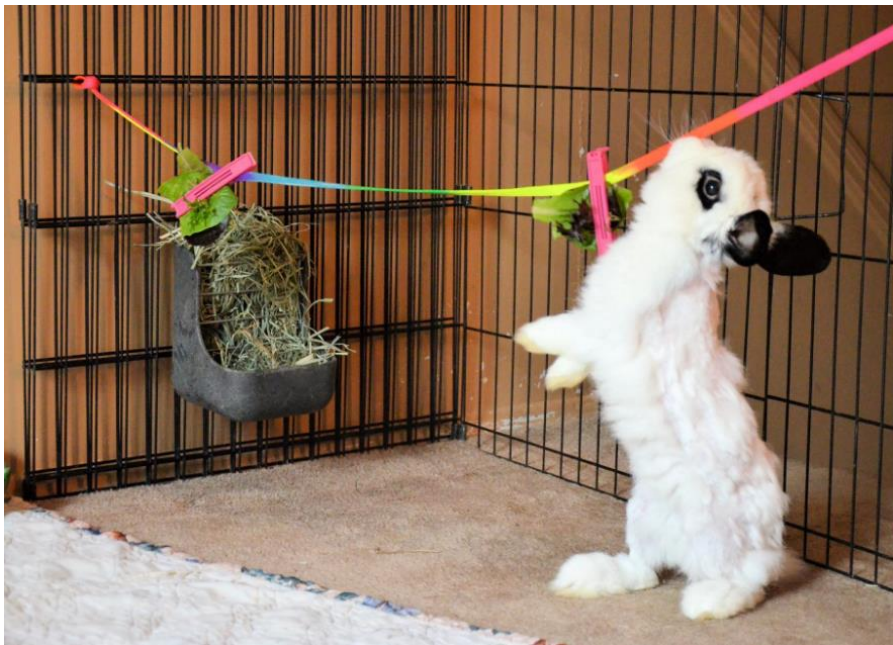
Willow (Plain or woven)

Fleece braids

Seagrass balls

Paper towel tubes

For more stimulation, don't be afraid to make things challenging every once in a while!



-Hide some treats under toys or in piles of hay.

-Get a line and some clothes pins and put veggies up so your rabbit has to reach for them.

-Get some of the puzzle toys from pet stores, normally made for small dogs.

-Stuff hay and treats inside paper towel rolls.

We have seen slinkies are a popular choice for many rabbit lovers as toys, and while the rabbits do have fun with them, we do not recommend them as a toy to be left unattended with a rabbit for any length of time as it's not uncommon for them to be tangled inside if they stick their head in.

For more ideas, check out these great sites!

<http://bunnyapproved.com/diy-rabbit-toy-ideas/>

<http://www.budgetbunny.ca/category/rabbit-toys/>

<http://rabbit.org/tag/toys>

Housing



When it comes to figuring out your rabbit's new home, bigger is always better! Rabbits have a lot of energy that they need to burn and they love to run, play and binky. Many pet stores sell small plastic bottom cages that are not only bad for their hocks, they're also far too small for anything other than containing the rabbit overnight.

For housing, we recommend instead of a pet store cage, using an x-pen (Also known as the wire puppy play pens as pictured above) so they can get more space. If your rabbit has a habit of trying to jump out, attach something as a roof to prevent them from doing so. A rabbit trying to jump over these pens can easily catch a foot between the wire and wind up hurting themselves. It's also a rather long fall on the other side.

The basic necessities are going to be a litter box, water dish, food dish and soft blankets. For the litter box, a bigger sized pan the better. The corner boxes that most pet stores sell are far too small for them to sit in comfortably and many

rabbits will refuse to use them, leading to frustration when it comes to litter training. We get our litter boxes from the dollar store, they are made for cats so bigger in size and more comfortable for your bun to use.

There is often a lot of debate on water dish vs. water bottle. It's been something for years that rabbits are usually pictured with a water bottle, the kind that are usually used for small rodents as they can't kick their bedding in to the water and make a mess of it. With this set up, it's not generally a concern and the pros of a dish far outweigh the cons. Bottles develop a lot of bacteria build up from the standing water in an enclosed space, it often gets quite slimy inside and develops a buildup of algae. Rabbits naturally drink more from a dish than a bottle as it is less effort, and the generally more frequent water changes makes it healthier for them all around. Make sure that the dish is heavy and not easily tippable, as some rabbits like to try and throw them around. If you have a particularly determined water thrower, there are dishes that will attach firmly to an x-pen as well.

For bedding, if your rabbit is litter trained using a fleece blanket outside of the litter box would be ideal if you are planning to have your rabbit in a contained area. For the first few days, the rabbit may go outside the litter box since it is a new, unfamiliar environment and they are marking their territory, but they should pick it up quickly once more. You can encourage them to use the litter box faster once again by placing their poops back inside the box. Make sure the area your rabbit lives in is soft and padded, rabbits can develop sores on their hocks very easily. Make sure that the flooring is always kept clean, as urine can cause hock problems as well!





In the litter pan, we use wood stove pellets, which can be bought from Canadian Tire in a 40 lb bag for \$6. It will last a long time and has good odor control. Make sure that the pellets you buy have no added chemicals. Other popular choices are Yesterday's News and Carefresh. Carefresh recently added baking soda to their formula, which can cause liver failure and other problems if ingested by rabbits so we recommend going with a healthier version such as the Oxbow bedding if you decide to use the soft, recycled newspaper litter.

Something that can be done to ensure litter box use is to place some hay inside of the box. As gross as it sounds, rabbits do like to eat and "go" at the same time. We find that putting hay in half the litter pan keeps the hay fairly clean, as the rabbits are turned eating and wind up going consistently in the opposite corner.

Do NOT use kitty litter or pine/cedar shavings. Kitty litter can be ingested and will clump together in the digestive tract, which will result in some very serious health problems. Shavings are extremely dusty and fragrant, which can cause respiratory problems as well as liver damage if ingested.

We do not encourage rabbits living outdoors. There are many hazards to rabbits outside such as predators, extreme weather (Hot and cold, thunderstorms, etc.), frostbite, medical problems such as flystrike (<http://www.rabbit.org/journal/2-12/fly-strike.html>) and many more. However, occasional short periods of playtime in a safe, enclosed area can be very beneficial for your bunny!



If you plan on using a harness, be sure to use an H-style harness. It will look like an H from the top. The vest ones are constricting and easily escaped while the figure 8 harness can tighten and strangle the rabbit. However, if the rabbit is easily startled, we do not recommend taking them out on the harness, instead in a covered x-pen. If your rabbit should bolt in a harness, it is fairly easy for them to break a limb or a spine.



When rabbits are brought outside they should be constantly supervised to ensure that there are no predators nearby, as well to make sure they do not dig out or escape which happens more often then you would think. Rabbits are also very

prone to heat stroke, so always make sure they have shade and if it is too warm, bring your rabbit inside.

You also want to ensure the area you are in is completely enclosed and covered. Birds of prey are common in Alberta and last thing you want is your bunny being carried off by a hawk!

Also ensure the area you are in is free of potentially toxic plants and has not been sprayed with pesticides. Rabbits will get in to basically anything they can, so you need to be sure their area is completely safe!

For a list of plants toxic to rabbits, see here!

http://www.medirabbit.com/EN/GI_diseases/Food/Toxic_plants_en.pdf

When it comes to leaving the house with your rabbit, you want to ensure that you have a safe way for them to travel! There are many styles of carriers out there, we encourage the use of the hard sided plastic carrier. It allows them a little room, but not too much that they would be flung around in the case of a car accident. Simply ensure that you have a blanket down so that they can gain traction, and if you plan on leaving for a length of time put some hay in the back and have a water source available for them. Make sure that the water is not easily moveable, as you don't want to soak your rabbits sitting area.

Never travel with your rabbit loose in your vehicle! Not only is it a distracted driving hazard, but also a danger to them should you ever get in an accident!



Bonding with your bunny!



One of the most common things people contact us for asking about is how to bond with your rabbit. Rabbits are a prey species and therefore, naturally fearful. Everything in the world seems to want to eat them and they can be skittish because of this instinct.

Contrary to what a lot of people think, rabbits are not naturally cuddly animals, at least not in the sense that a lot of people consider to be “cuddly”. They don’t generally want to sit in your lap for hours on end and they are not usually big fans of being picked up. The sensation of being picked up is not unlike them being grabbed and carried away by a predator, so they naturally don’t tend to like it. That’s not to say you should never handle your rabbit, but for the first little while when getting to know your rabbit, it may be best to get to know them while they’re feet are on the ground.

If you’ve ever watched a pair of rabbits whom are bonded, you will notice there is generally a lot of grooming involved in their relationship. Most rabbits love being stroked and petted, especially over their face and ears. If you pet down along their face, they will generally settle right down and flatten out for a grooming session. It’s one of the best ways to build trust early on in the relationship!

If your bun is not too comfortable with petting yet, you can instead sit in their play area and do something where your attention isn't solely focused on them. Read a book, watch a movie (Quietly) or drawing are popular options. Usually, the rabbits will grow curious and come over to see what you're doing. Do this for some time each day, gradually working up to touching them and petting.

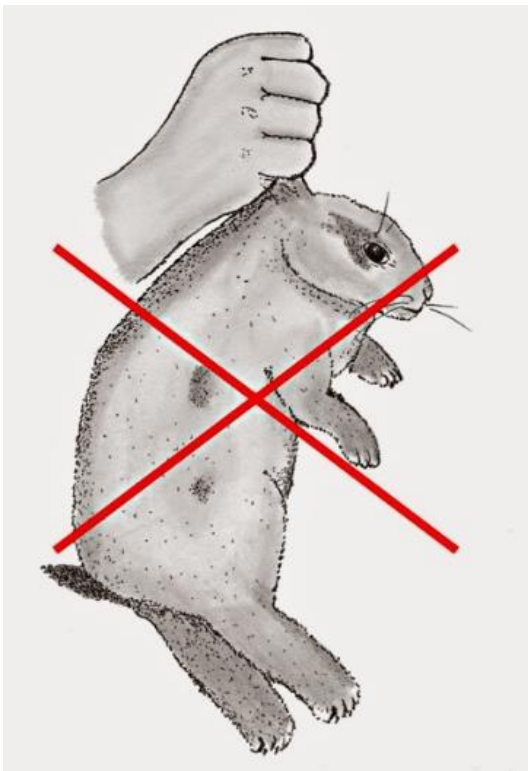
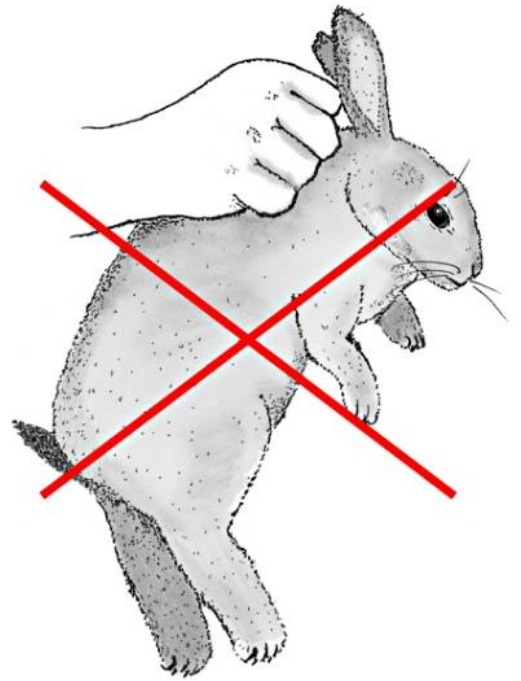


When it comes to picking up your rabbit, there are many methods that many people use. The one that we have found works best is to first pet the rabbits head, so they flatten down and relax. It makes it much easier to get them, as they aren't scared or concerned, unlike how when most people go to grab them.

Approach them from the front, then with your right hand you scoop them from around the chest just behind their front leg, and with your left you scoop them under the bum. Then bring them up and put all four of their feet to your chest. The first few times you do this your rabbit may be unsure, so make sure when they get there you are fully supporting them and if your rabbit goes to run over your shoulder or down off your arm, that you have a firm hold around their shoulders.



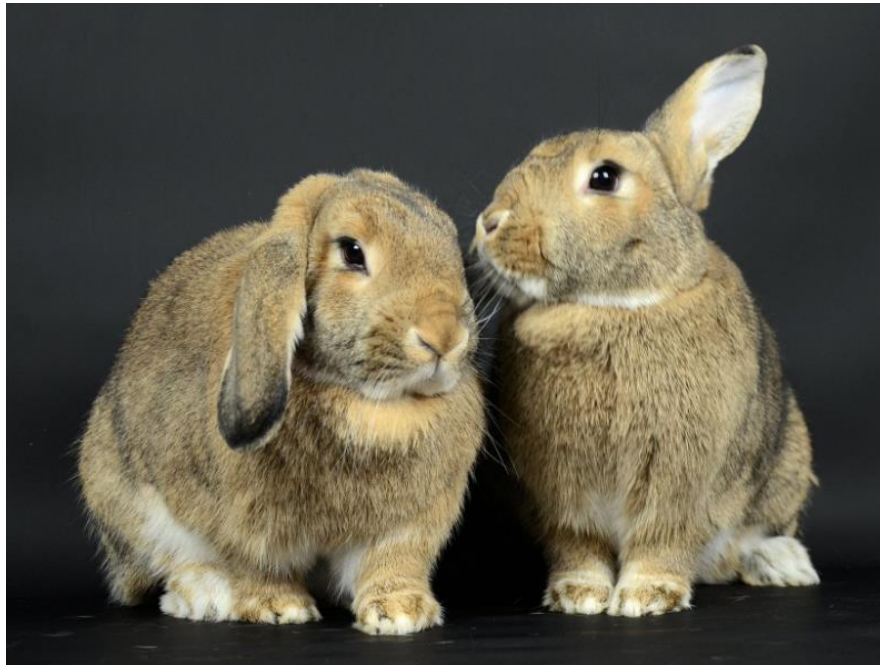
Never try to scruff your rabbit. It can actually cause damage by separating the skin from the tissue underneath, and can be painful for the bunny. Many people justify this method of handling as they say this is how a mother rabbit holds their babies, but this is a myth. Mother rabbits do not carry their young in their mouth like a cat would, in fact they spend as minimal time with their young as possible to prevent predators from finding their babies.



Never grab a rabbit by the ears! For some reason this is a method of handling that people still find acceptable, it is extremely painful for the bunny! It would be no different than trying to pick up a person by the ears!

However is comfortable for you, just always be sure that your rabbit is fully supported!

Bunnies bonding with other bunnies!



Many rabbits do wonderfully with a companion, there is little that is nicer to see than a pair of bonded bunnies. However, many people don't realize just how much work bonding rabbits can be! Rabbits are naturally very territorial and sometimes it can take many months before you can comfortably leave a pair of rabbits in a pen together without strict supervision. You cannot just put rabbits together and expect them to get along, the same way you can't expect all people to live together happily! Rabbit fights can be very serious if you are not prepared for them!

The first thing you are going to want when introducing rabbits is to make sure that both rabbits are spayed/neutered. Many people get rabbits as babies and put them together, thinking that rabbits that have grown up together will get along. This is false. It is a possibility that they will, but more likely than not the sex hormones become a factor you are going to have two rabbits that are fighting and ripping each other apart. It is best to try introductions when there



are a bit older and their hormones have had time to settle after their surgery.

To be safe with first introductions, we always do it in a completely neutral space that neither rabbit has claimed. Popular choices include a different room of the house or bathtubs, where there are a lot of unfamiliar smells (No water!). You are going to need to be close by and ready to act should one rabbit go after the other one!

Hopefully the rabbits show some interest in each other and you can increase the number of “dates” and if you’re lucky, your rabbits will easily bond. However, it can be a very long, intensive process.

For these cases, here are a few sites that are good resources!

<http://houserabbitga.com/bonding-guide/>

<http://www.rabbit.org/journal/4-4/tough-bonding.html>

<http://rabbit.org/faq-bonding-multiple-rabbits/>

<https://www.thebunnychick.com/category/bonding/>



Rabbits with other animals!



A question we're commonly asked is if rabbits get along with cats or dogs. More often than not, this question more depends on the cat/dog more so than the rabbit as they are the main concern in the equation and the more likely of the two to hurt the other.

Dogs, when first introduced to rabbits, generally have one of two reactions. Disinterest or complete fascination. Generally the disinterested dogs will be the easiest to work with, slow introductions between pens and watching to make sure neither make a move on the other. However, if your dog has a high prey drive, that's where the problems come in. Some dogs just need a lot of slow introducing and they gradually get more comfortable. However, if your dog does have a high prey drive, it will be best to consider a pet other than a rabbit.

Most cats are usually good with rabbits, but if you have a cat that is prone to biting/scratching, a rabbit may not be a good mix. Cats naturally have a lot of bacteria in their claws and mouth, which poses a large danger to rabbits. A single wound from a cat can kill a rabbit from infection 12 hours later, a wound from a cat is not laughing matter. Slow introductions are key, and making sure that your cat is comfortable with the rabbit and not likely to lash out. It is also worth noting that many cats naturally carry *Pastuerella*. This is a bacteria that many rabbits carry naturally as well (Around 80%) but if they don't, there is a possibility that introducing it can make your rabbit sick.

Grooming

All rabbits do require a basic level of grooming. Rabbits go through a molt a few times a year and they shed an extreme amount of hair during this time. While they are shedding, you need to be diligent in brushing out the shedding fur as blockages from them ingesting hair are not uncommon and they are often fatal. We often find that just a brush isn't enough. A dull tooth metal comb works well for working up hair that is

lower down in their coat. For any hair that is too fine to be combed/brushed out, plucking by hand works well. Do not pull any of the hair still firmly attached to the rabbit, it should come out with little effort.



Many people love the extra fluffy rabbits like Angora's and Jersey Woolies, but there is a lot of extra work that goes in to maintaining these rabbits. They need to be brushed out and combed at least every few days. If they are allowed to get

matted, it can cause a number of skin problems and is painful for the bunny. They also may require a shave every few months when their wool grows out long. We recommend having this done with through a vet clinic that works with rabbits, or a groomer that regularly works with rabbits as their skin is very thin and fragile, so it can be potentially dangerous work, especially if the hair is matted.

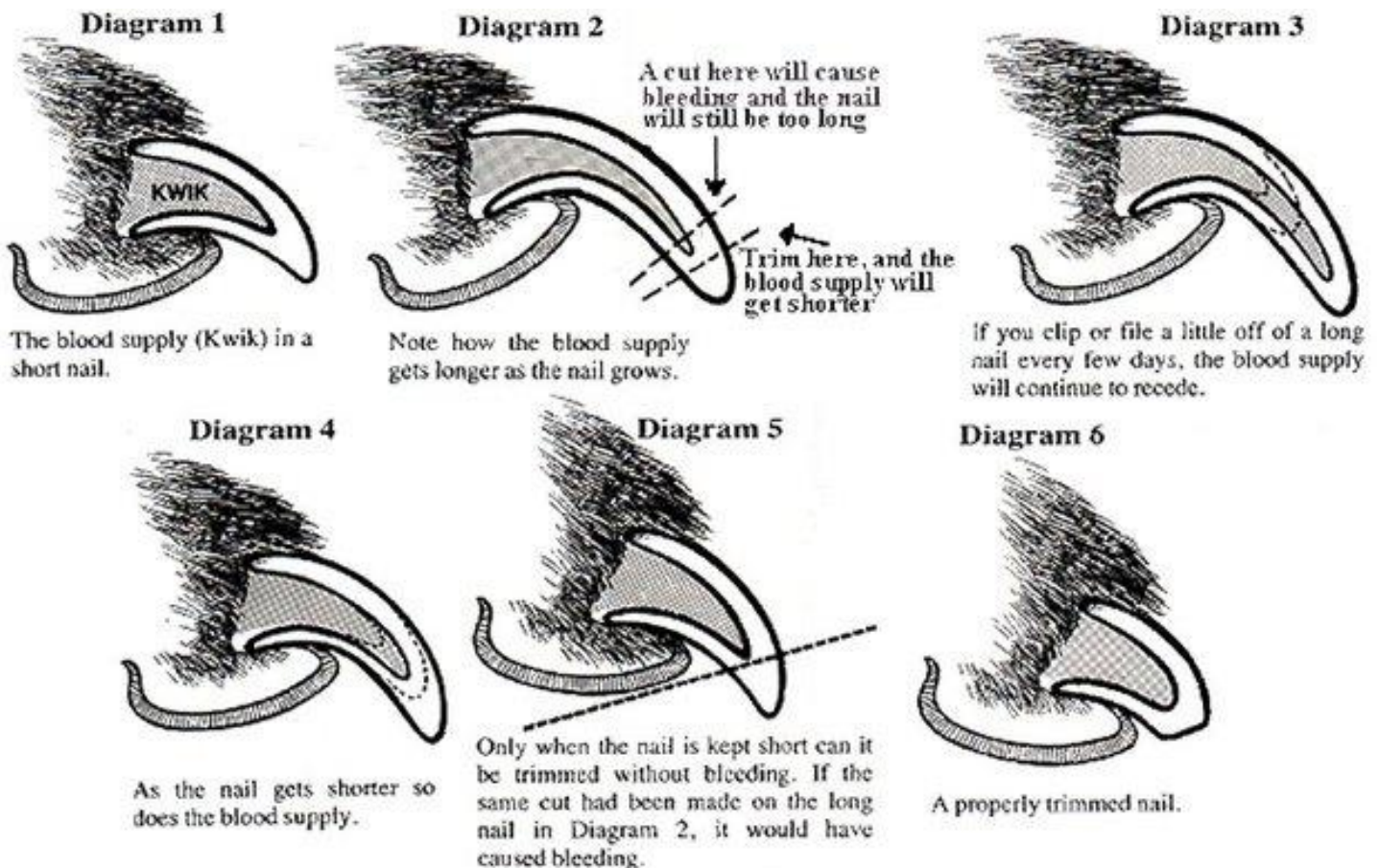




Nail trimming should also be done on a monthly basis. Rabbits do not have pads on the bottom of their feet like cats and dogs do, and because of this they can easily develop hock sores if their nails are allowed to grow long. Rabbits also use their toes and feet when grooming, so long nails can effect that as well. We recommend using a scissor style nail trimmer (Pictured to the left) instead of a

“guillotine” kind, as we have seen rabbits jerk their foot away while trimming and the guillotine style has pulled the entire nail out.

This leads to a surprising amount of blood and pain for the bunny. If you should cut the nail too short and hit the quick, don’t panic. Always try to have styptic powder on hand in case you nick the bun’s nail. If you don’t have it, flour can be a good alternate although it does not work as well.



Not many people know that rabbits have scent glands as well!

Scent glands are located on either side of your rabbits genitals. Some rabbits develop a lot of waxy, strong smelling build up in them that is easily cleaned out, while other rabbits sometimes never have a problem with build up and keep them clean themselves. It all depends on your individual bunny and their cleaning habits. Rabbits that are overweight can have a harder time cleaning them so they may need more rear end maintenance.

It is also important to remember that, despite all those cute looking videos on Youtube, rabbits should not be bathed! It isn't beneficial to them as they keep themselves clean and it is highly stressful for them.



Medical Care

If the need should ever arise where a vet is needed, the vet that we suggest going to would be Calgary Avian and Exotic Pet Clinic, where the information is provided below. When it comes to rabbits, not just any vet will do. Because they are considered exotic animals, not many vets are versed in rabbits and can actually wind up doing more harm than good. Whichever vet you decide to use, make sure that they commonly see rabbits!



Putting together a bunny first aid kit may be a good idea so you are prepared should the need arise. A first aid can include,

Critical Care

Gauze

Vet Wrap

30-40 ml Syringe

Nail trimmers

Thermometer

Rubber gloves

Kwik-Stop

Medical tape

Heating pad

Q-Tips

Lubrication for thermometer

1 cc syringes

Towel or blanket for wrapping

It's best to know ahead of time how to take temperature, as temperature is extremely important. If a rabbit is too hot or too cold, you can wind up in big trouble!

Normal Rabbit Vitals

Temperature: 38.5 – 40.0°C

Pulse: 180 to 325 beats per minute

Respiratory rate: 30 to 60 breaths per minute

Your rabbit's nails should be trimmed once a month. If you are not confident in doing this yourself, contact us and we can help you out.

If your rabbit is showing any of these signs, contact a vet immediately.

Hunched posture	Nasal discharge/Sneezing
Half closed eyes	Increased respiratory effort
Reluctance to move	Ear base swelling
Reduced appetite	Sore hocks
Weight loss/Poor body condition	Lumps, bumps and swellings
Dehydration	Abnormal droppings
Eye discharge	Abnormal urine
Grinding teeth; No nose wiggle	Behavior changes
Vocalization	

While all the rabbits adopted from us are already spayed and neutered, it is important to remember that if your rabbit is not it is extremely important to do so. Rabbits are very prone to cancer of the reproductive tract (80% of females will develop it by the age of 5 years old!) and it is one of the most important things you can do for your bunny!

Emergency Numbers

Calgary Avian and Exotic Pet Clinic

Bay 1, 2308 - 24th Street S.W.

Calgary, AB T2T 5H8

Tel: 403-240-3577

This vet clinic specializes in exotic animals and they are the best at what they do with rabbits. We highly recommend them!

Western Veterinary Emergency Center

1802 10 Ave SW

Calgary, AB T3C 0J8

Tel: 403-770-1340

Pet Poison Hotline

1-800-213-6680

www.petpoisonhotline.com

ASPCA Animal Poison Control Center

1-888-426-4435

www.aspca.org/pet-care/poison-control