

# Rabbits

## Project Guide



### Rabbits Checklist

- ☐ **Heavy Duty Small Rabbit Hutch**  
101203546
- ☐ **Woven Grass Hide Away Hut**  
107289279
- ☐ **Corner Litter Pan**  
107289013
- ☐ **Food Container**  
101007171
- ☐ **Water Bottle**  
101013133
- ☐ **Pet Taxi Pet Carrier**  
101293776
- ☐ **Rabbits: Care Made Easy Book**  
101335006
- ☐ **Nail Trimmers**  
101329966
- ☐ **Grass or Hay for Rabbits**  
107312148
- ☐ **Premium Rabbit Food - 5 lb. bag**  
101306313
- ☐ **Woven Grass Play Ball**  
107289277
- ☐ **Country Lane Litter - 25 lb. bag**  
101060059
- ☐ **Wild Crunch N Chunky Treat**  
107312150

### Signs of Good Health

Check for signs of good health in your rabbit by observing it for a few moments. A healthy rabbit will be frisky, vigorous and have bright eyes. An unhealthy rabbit may have dull eyes, drainage from the nostrils, and a dull coat. If these symptoms develop, consult your local veterinarian immediately.

Secondly, observe the rabbit's excretory materials. The fecal pellets should be firm and dry. There should not be any indication of fecal material sticking to the anal area of the rabbit. Soft bowel movements may be a sign of digestive upsets which can become very severe and even fatal.

If diarrhea develops, remove feed and provide only water and small amounts of hay for 2-3 days. Once normal bowel movements return, gradually add back feed over 2-3 days.

Sometimes a rabbit will have bright red urine. This condition is totally normal in rabbits. It's caused by the incomplete metabolism of a food nutrient.

Your rabbit's urine may also be very cloudy at times and appear to contain granules. This is entirely normal. The granules are calcium precipitates. The rabbit cannot regulate blood calcium levels and the excess calcium that is excreted by the kidneys into the urine causes the urine to appear cloudy and granular.



Purina Mills Rabbit -  
Nutrition & Management

## Feeding And Watering

When rabbits are fed a high fiber complete pellet, the feeding of supplement hay is not a requirement. The rabbit's diet should contain a proper fiber level to ensure a healthy digestive tract. There are a couple of circumstances where feeding long stem grass hay can be beneficial.

If a rabbit is off of feed (not eating) or a digestive tract issue like diarrhea arises, reducing the amount of pelleted feed and offering some long stem grass hay is a good management practice. The long stem hay will provide an extra source of fiber that will be digested slowly. This stabilizes the microbial fermentation in the cecum and helps restore gastrointestinal (G.I.) tract health. After a few days, the amounts of pellets can be slowly increased to their original levels.

Long-stem grass hay also makes an excellent treat for rabbits. It is both palatable and healthy - the extra fiber is digested slowly to maintain digestive track health. And since long stem grass hay is eaten slowly by the rabbit, it gives the rabbit something to do, which provides a psychological benefit to the rabbit.

If problems persist, it is always a good idea to consult a veterinarian.

Your rabbit should have access to water at all times. You can provide water in a spill-proof dish or crock. Water bottles that are specially made for rabbits are also available. Either method is fine as long as the quality of the water is maintained through routine cleaning of the watering utensils.



A good disinfecting agent for washing all rabbit utensils, rabbit equipment, and cages is a solution of one tablespoon of household bleach mixed in one quart of water. The materials should be scrubbed with this solution and then rinsed thoroughly.

Purina Mills Rabbit - NUTRITION & MANAGEMENT.  
[www.rabbitchow.com](http://www.rabbitchow.com)

## Housing And Shelter

Housing for your pet can vary considerably depending upon your home and your locality, but it has one universal requirement: rabbits need good ventilation. Without adequate ventilation, your pet can be susceptible to respiratory diseases. Keep this in mind when you buy or build a cage for your rabbit. Make sure at least a portion of the cage is constructed of wire mesh to allow good air flow.

Rabbits can be kept outdoors, but they need shelter from the wind, rain, drafts, and the summer sun. If protected from the elements, rabbits can withstand very cold weather. An enclosed box inside a wire cage is a popular design that affords both protection and ventilation.

If you choose to keep your rabbit in a cage either indoors or outdoors, the size of the cage will vary depending on the size of the rabbit. For smaller breeds of rabbits (under six pounds), the cage should be approximately 20" deep, 30-36" wide, and approximately 12" high. Larger animals need a larger cage and most will be accommodated by cages that are 24" deep, 48" wide, and 12-16" high. The floor of the cage may vary considerably. A self-cleaning cage (the urine and fecal

matter drop through the floor) has a floor made of wire mesh or grid that forms squares one-half inch wide and one inch long.

With self-cleaning cages, it is important to provide some type of tray or method of collecting the rabbit's waste. These trays should be lined with paper, filled with wood shavings, cat litter, or other absorbent material to help control odors.

If your pet weighs 9 pounds or more, you should consider rabbit housing with solid floors. Solid floors will support a large rabbit's weight better and will prevent its feet from becoming irritated. Rabbits that are kept on solid floors should be bedded with newspaper, wood shavings, straw, hay, or other absorbent materials. The bedding should be changed daily.

Regardless of the type of housing you select, it is mandatory that the cage be cleaned frequently to prevent odors and disease.

Purina Mills Rabbit - NUTRITION & MANAGEMENT.  
[www.rabbitchow.com](http://www.rabbitchow.com)



**FUN FACT:**  
A rabbit's teeth  
never stop growing.

## Well-Trimmed Rabbit

Rabbit toenails become quite sharp and rabbits can scratch if they become frightened or are not handled properly. Rabbit toenails can be trimmed very easily with either trimmers that are used for humans or the type that are designed for other pets. The toenails of rabbits are trimmed in the same manner as those of a dog or cat and they should be trimmed regularly at three-month intervals or as necessary depending on the breed.

The rabbit's front incisors grow approximately one-half to three quarters of an inch per month. It is very important that these incisors are aligned so that they continue to wear off the tooth growth regularly. If the incisors are not aligned properly, the teeth may grow excessively long and inhibit the animal from eating properly. If necessary, teeth can be trimmed on a regular basis to prevent any problems as there are absolutely no nerve endings in the incisors of a rabbit. You can also provide toys and chew treats to help manage teeth.

Purina Mills Rabbit - NUTRITION & MANAGEMENT.  
[www.rabbitchow.com](http://www.rabbitchow.com)

## Getting a Handle on Your Rabbit

When frightened, the rabbit's only defense mechanism is to run away. It is very important that you handle your rabbit so that if it becomes afraid, it won't injure itself or scratch you.

Your rabbit should always be handled in such a way that is protected. This is easily done by grasping the skin at the back of the neck with one hand and supporting the weight of its body with the other hand, under the hindquarters or stomach area.

Purina Mills Rabbit - NUTRITION & MANAGEMENT.  
[www.rabbitchow.com](http://www.rabbitchow.com)



## Litter Box Training

It's not difficult to house-train a rabbit but it does take a little time and dedication. It's best to start with a young rabbit that is between 6 and 13 weeks old because this age group adjusts to indoor living easier than older rabbits.

Put the new rabbit in its cage for 24 hours. Do not disturb or handle. Observe which corner the rabbit urinates. Once a rabbit has scented out one spot to use as its toilet, it will always use the same spot.

Put your litter box (a cat litter box will do) over the toilet corner. Once you are sure the rabbit is using the box, you may start handling your new pet. Start by removing the bunny for 10-15 minutes several times a day. The rabbit, if treated gently, will soon enjoy the trips outside its cage.

You may then want to leave the rabbit out of its cage for longer periods of time, but watch carefully and return it to its cage if it shows signs of lifting its tail to urinate. If you spot this, spray the rabbit with a water bottle and return it to its cage. By the end of the third week, you should be able to leave the door of the cage open when you are home. If "accidents" occur and your rabbit does not use the box immediately, place a small piece of wood that has been soaked in a small amount of rabbit urine in the litter box and it will get the idea very quickly. Spraying apple bitters on the spot will prevent the rabbit from returning. NEVER hit your rabbit. This will only make it mean and aggressive.

If you move the litter box, your rabbit may return to the litter box's former location to eliminate, even though the box is no longer there. It may be necessary to again place a piece of urine soaked wood in the box to get the rabbit to use the box in a new location.

The bunny may still leave small fecal droppings here and there. Whisk them up with your dustpan and broom. Do not leave droppings on the floor. This will only encourage the bunny to keep using the same area for the toilet.

Un-neutered males and un-spayed females may "mark" their territory. Spaying or neutering your rabbit will help to improve litter box habits.

## Free Ranging

Indoor pet rabbits are often allowed to have the "run of the house," or at least allowed to roam free in certain rooms. Your pet rabbit will certainly enjoy frolicking in the house. There are, however, certain risks you should be aware of at all times.

Rabbits have a tendency to chew on things and may gnaw furniture, curtains, or carpeting. Rabbits also have the tendency to chew on electrical wiring, which is dangerous for the rabbit and you since it creates a fire hazard. If you give your rabbit free run of a room or your house, bunny-proof your house. Take precautions to avoid these problems before they occur.

When you catch your rabbit chewing or doing something it shouldn't be doing, just put it back into its cage and ignore it. Pretty soon it will associate going back to its cage with bad behavior.

When you leave home for the day or even a few minutes, put your rabbit back in its cage.

Purina Mills Rabbit - NUTRITION & MANAGEMENT.  
[www.rabbitchow.com](http://www.rabbitchow.com)



# 8 Reasons for Raising Meat Rabbits on Your Homestead

Homesteading is becoming more and more popular with each new day. Whether it is gardening, composting, raising chickens or owning bees, people are choosing to live off of their land no matter how little they may own. Many people new to backyard homesteading should start small - maybe start with gardening and a few chickens, and move forward from there. If you're interested in living off of your land, raising rabbits for meat may be a good option for you.

Raising meat rabbits is becoming more wide-spread. Not only is rabbit meat lean, nutritious and tasty, rabbits are fairly easy-keepers. They are quiet, docile, provide great manure for the garden, and they are able to reproduce year-round!

Here are eight reasons to consider raising rabbits for meat:

- A rabbit's reproduction rate is high- one pair of healthy does can produce more than 600 pounds of meat in a year
- Rabbits need very little living space.
- Low maintenance; easy to care for.
- Quiet animals - clean and quiet and won't bother the neighbors!
- Minimal feed required - according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, a rabbit needs 4 pounds of feed to make 1 pound of meat.
- Rabbit manure makes a great addition to your garden soil; no need to compost, just add it right to the soil!
- Nutritious, delicious meat - Rabbit meat is an excellent source of protein and has less cholesterol and fat than chicken, beef, lamb or pork.
- Rabbits are relatively easy to butcher and clean - there are a variety of 'humane' ways to slaughter a rabbit cleanly and effectively. Some choose to use a heavy stick and hit the rabbit in the back of the head, knocking it unconscious, while others choose to break the neck. There is a new tool out called the Rabbit Wringer that is virtually fool proof and allows for the animal to be killed quickly and with little to no pain.

8 Reasons for Raising Meat Rabbits on Your Homestead.  
info.mannapro.com

## FUN FACTS:

- Rabbit meat is low in fat and cholesterol.
- Rabbits are able to reproduce year-round.

