

# Rabbits

*Oryctolagus cuniculus*



**Approximate life span:** 7-10 years

**Estimated adult size:** varies widely by breed

**Difficulty Level:** Intermediate



Domestic rabbits, also known as house rabbits or bunny rabbits, are a completely different species from wild rabbits commonly found outdoors. Rabbits are playful, curious, and can be litter trained as a suitable house pet. There are currently more than 40 recognized breeds in the US in a variety of color patterns, ranging in size from dwarf to giant.

## HOUSING REQUIREMENTS

Rabbits require enough cage space for three good hops in a well-ventilated cage with no wire flooring as this can damage their feet. They should have a couple hours of exercise each day. Bigger is always better, but at a minimum, cages should be at least 24'x24'x18' for small breeds or 36'x36'x24' for large breeds. Use paper-based litter, changing every few days and spot cleaning daily. Avoid wood shavings as they can contribute to respiratory illness and irritate skin.

## DIETARY NEEDS

**Hay:** Rabbits need free access to grass hay at all times to promote dental and GI health.

**Pellets:** Newborn, juvenile, and pregnant or lactating rabbits should have free access to an alfalfa-based pellet. Adult rabbits over 6 months old should be fed a timothy-based pellet, in more limited quantities (¼-½ cup daily, depending on veterinary recommendations). Avoid pellets with added grains, seeds, fruits, and nuts as these items are too high in fat and carbs, which can lead to obesity and other health issues.

**Greens:** A salad about the size of the rabbit should be offered daily, including a wide variety of greens for added hydration and enrichment.

**Treats:** Starchy vegetables and fruits should be limited to no more than 1 tablespoon per 2-lb rabbit each day.

## RECOMMENDED VETERINARY CARE

- Annual exams
- Spay/neuter to prevent reproductive illness
- Nail trims, as needed
- Common illness: fly strike, respiratory infection, GI stasis, dental disease