



Bunny Basics and Beyond

Bunny Biology

- Bunnies can see almost 360 degrees around their bodies, but they have a blind spot at their nose and tail.
- Bunnies use their ears to hear, communicate and regulate their body temperature.
- Bunnies like to be touched around their head and ears.

Bunny Facts

- Rabbits are lagomorphs, which means they are mammals belonging to the order Lagomorpha; a hare, rabbit, or pika.
- Rabbits are crepuscular, which means they're primarily active during the twilight hours.

Health

- **Diet**
 - Make sure you provide fresh water in a bottle or bowl.
 - Feed your rabbit Timothy hay, orchard grass or oat hay. 75% of a rabbit's diet should be hay, and it should always be accessible in a hay container or hay net.
 - Choose a high-quality pellet with no colored pieces or dried fruit. Rabbits require only one quarter cup of pellets daily.
 - Provide your bunny with fresh greens twice daily: green leaf lettuce, cilantro and parsley are good choices.
 - Treat your bunny to bananas, apples, carrots, pineapple, cherries or raspberries, but only 1% of their diet can be treat based.
- **Poop**
 - Fecal pellets- There should always be fecal pellets a rabbit's space. Rabbits poop frequently.
 - Cecotropes- Rabbits need to eat their cecotropes. They are vitamin packed poop that look like a tight bunch of grapes. You should never see their cecotropes. You may also never see them ingest them.
 - Urine color can range from yellow to rust red.
- **GI Stasis**
 - Seek vet care if there is no poop in the cage or litter box.
 - If you notice a loss of appetite
 - If you see behavioral changes, such as being hunched in the corner, not taking a favorite treat.
 - If your bunny is lethargic.
- **Eyes and Feet**
 - Pink eye, blocked tear ducts and teeth issues can cause eye issues.

- Rabbits are not designed to live on wire floors, which can cause sore hocks. Wire floors are hard on their feet, so flat bottom cages are best
- **Ears and Abscesses**
 - Ear mites and ear infections.
 - Abscesses can be due to an injury or misaligned teeth.
- **Snuffles and Skin issues**
 - Upper respiratory illness can turn to pneumonia if not treated.
 - Ringworm, Cheyletiella or other types of mites can also impact a bunny's health.
- **Head tilt or Torticollis**
 - Caused by E. cuniculi parasite.
 - Causes dizziness and head to begin to tilt.

- **RHDV-2**

RHDV-2 is a virus that affects lagomorphs. Symptoms include:

- Loss of appetite
- Lethargy
- High fever
- Seizures
- Bleeding from nose mouth or rectum
- Sudden death
- **Teeth**
 - Rabbits have 28 teeth known as elodont dentition.
 - Teeth must align properly to keep teeth from overgrowing.
- **Grooming**
 - Rabbits require regular nail trims. Long nails make it difficult for rabbits to groom. They can also contribute to sore hocks because rabbits have to change their weight distribution on their feet to compensate for long nails.
 - Scent glands should be cleaned every 4-6 months.

Behavior

- Most behavior issues are due to age (spayed or neutered), territory or illness.
- Digging and Chewing is innate and cannot be trained away.

Handling

- Bunnies prefer to have all four feet on the ground.
- Rabbits can break their backs if not handled correctly. To pick up your rabbit, gently slide one hand underneath her body behind her front legs, and with your other hand, support her back end, scooping her up in one motion. Quickly bring her close to your body for added support.
- Aggressive rabbits should be approached over the top of the head and picked up with a towel.

Housing and Hay

- Bigger is better! A rabbit's home should be at least 4-6 times the size of the bunny when he's entirely stretched out. A good guideline is 8-square feet of enclosed space with at least 24-square feet of exercise space.
- Like all companion animals, rabbits should be kept inside with the family. Since rabbits are particularly susceptible to heat, cold and dampness, they need to live in a controlled climate.
- Rabbits are very clean animals and they like their environments to be tidy, too. Litter box should be changed daily. Hay should be in its own container unless the rabbit is having litter box issues then hay can be used to promote litter box use.
- A good paper-based litter is best. NEVER use clay cat litter or wood shavings (cedar or aspen) for litter. These products can result in respiratory or gastrointestinal problems.

Enrichment

Rabbits enjoy:

- Willow balls or willow sticks
- Cardboard boxes
- DIY rabbit toys



Resources:

Robyn Levy: rlevy@ddfl.org

House Rabbit website: <https://rabbit.org>

Dumb Friends League: <https://ddfl.org>