

# Rabbit

There are many varieties, or breeds, of rabbits

*Oryctolagus cuniculus*



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<b>Adult Size</b>	3 – 30 pounds, depending on breed
<b>Lifespan</b>	7 – 12 years, depending on breed
<b>Male/Female Difference</b>	After about 6 weeks of age, the sex organ, when pressed out with the thumb and forefinger, will appear more rounded in a male and more V shaped in a female.
<b>Compatibility</b>	In general, rabbits should be of the same sex and size if they are to be housed together. Ideally the rabbits should have been kept together from a young age. Keeping two or more rabbits is greatly advantageous, but rabbits introduced at older ages can be aggressive. Having rabbits fixed will help with socialization.
<b>Origin</b>	All domestic rabbits were bred from the wild European cotton tail.
<b>Climate</b>	Local climate is ideal. Rabbits will be happy with standard household temperatures. A rabbit kept in an outdoor hutch should be shielded from cold winds in the winter and hot sun in the summer.
<b>Day Cycle</b>	Diurnal (awake during the day.)
<b>Temperature</b>	Ideal 60-75 degrees Fahrenheit.
<b>Lighting</b>	No special lighting is required, but rabbits, like all creatures, will benefit greatly from natural sunlight, and a normal day/night cycle.
<b>Humidity</b>	Ambient humidity is ideal. Arid climates can be harsh on rabbits, as well as excessive humidity – over 70% can be dangerous, as rabbits are highly susceptible, to heat stroke.
<b>Habitat/Territory</b>	Deciduous forest, woodland, and grassland, but there are species of rabbit and hare living all over the world! Pet rabbits have a long history of domestication and household environs suit them well.

<b>Substrate/Bedding</b>	Aspen shavings, compressed hardwood pellets, or recycled paper products are ideal. Cedar and pine shavings can emit gasses that may lead to liver problems.
<b>Hiding Place/Den</b>	Rabbits will greatly enjoy a hiding place that is snug, but gives them enough room to stand, turn around, and lie down.
<b>Cage Type</b>	Bigger is always better! Minimally four times the size of your rabbit is fine, but if the rabbit is to be kept in the cage the majority of the time, the cage should be at least half again as large. Rabbits also benefit from having a play gym to increase their space. Ideally, rabbits should spend more time out of their cage, in a rabbit proofed room. Rabbits should not be kept outside in hutches.
<b>Diet</b>	Hay and dark leafy greens should form the basis of a rabbit's diet. Slowly increasing amount and frequency as they age, adult rabbits should get one large handful of greens twice a day. Hay should be offered in unlimited amounts. Pellets, if fed, should be no more than one tablespoon per day, and ideally should only be offered as a treat.
<b>Supplements</b>	Yucca extracts and digestive enzymes can be very helpful in controlling impaction from ingested hair, as well as maintaining an attractive coat.
<b>Diet Precautions</b>	Always have fresh hay available as a source of fiber. Rabbits under six weeks of age should not be fed fresh vegetables. You may witness your rabbit ingesting his/her feces directly from his/her anus. This is normal and helps the rabbit maintain gut flora and is necessary for intestinal health.
<b>Feeding</b>	Rabbits fed exclusively pellets may become obese. Feed a variety of fresh vegetables – one cup to several cups twice a day. Hay should offered in unlimited amounts.
<b>Water Source</b>	Water should always be available in a water bowl and changed if it becomes dirty or soiled.
<b>Grooming</b>	Rabbits can be brushed to reduce the risk of impacted hair. Nails should be cut once a month – this can be done at home with proper instruction, or your vet or Wilmette pet can provide this service.
<b>Oral and Foot Care</b>	Rabbit's teeth grow constantly, and they need sufficient wood chews to wear them down. A problem exists known as malocclusion, where if your pet's teeth are not worn down, they may need to be cut – again, your vet or Wilmette Pet can do this for you – it is not recommended that you attempt to cut teeth yourself. Nails should be cut once a month.
<b>Proper Handling</b>	Pick rabbits up from above, as approaching them from the front can make nervous rabbits more defensive. Hold them by the chest and rump, or support the feet to make them feel safe and secure. Rabbits should be handled carefully to avoid damaging delicate spines. Keep close to the ground in case they try to hop out of your arms. Do not pick them up by the ears or the scruff.

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**Habitat Maintenance**

Litter box/soiled area of the cage should be changed daily. A full substrate change should be performed once a week.

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**Health Concerns**

Malocclusion (the misalignment of teeth, as previously mentioned), the intestinal impaction of hair, and bacterial infection resulting in diarrhea and resulting dehydration are some of the most common concerns with rabbits. A lack of appetite could indicate gas, which could lead to further digestive problems; if baby Gas-X does not relieve the problem, contact your exotic vet. Having rabbits fixed will increase lifespan, cleanliness, and health.