

# Rabbit

There are many varieties, or breeds, of  
*Oryctolagus cuniculus*

Adult Size	3 – 5 pounds, depending on breed	Life Span	7 – 12 years, depending on breed
Male/Female Differences	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.		
Compatibility	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.		
Origin	All domestic rabbits were bred from the wild European cotton tail.		
Climate	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.		
Day Cycle	Diurnal (awake during the day.)		
Temperature	Ideal 60-75 degrees Fahrenheit.		
Lighting	No special lighting is required, but rabbits, like all creatures, will benefit greatly from natural sunlight, and a normal day/night cycle.		
Humidity	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.		

Habitat/Territory	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.
Substrate/Bedding	Aspen shavings, compressed hardwood pellets, or recycled paper products are ideal. Cedar and pine shavings can emit gasses that may lead to liver problems.
Hiding Place/Den	Rabbits will greatly enjoy a hiding place that is snug, but gives them enough room to stand, turn around, and lie down.
Cage Type	Bigger is 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 kept outside in a hutch should have a great deal of space – four feet by two is great.
Diet	A pelleted rabbit food should be fed to insure that your rabbit is meeting all of his/her nutritional needs. On top of that, rabbits over six weeks of age should be fed supplemental fresh vegetables (dark leafy greens are best.) Hay should always be available to your rabbit as a high amount of fiber is necessary for the rabbit's slow digestive system.
Supplements	Yucca extracts and digestive enzymes can be very helpful in controlling impaction from ingested hair, as well as maintaining an attractive coat.
Diet Precautions	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.
Feeding	Rabbits fed exclusively pellets may become obese. Hay should always be available at all times. Feed a variety of fresh vegetables – one cup to several cups daily on top of about a quarter to half cup of fresh pellets. Anything other than vegetables, hay, or pellets is a treat and should be fed sparingly.
Water Source	Water should always be available, mostly from a water bottle, and should be changed daily.

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Grooming	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.
Oral and Foot Care	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.
Proper Handling	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.
Habitat Maintenance	Litter box/soiled area of the cage should be changed daily. A full substrate change should be performed once a week.
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.

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