

For further clarification on accepted animal husbandry practices for rabbits, please contact the Vermont Agency of Agriculture's Animal Health Section at (802) 828-2421

If you suspect animal cruelty or neglect please visit:

[www.ReportAnimalCruelty.com](http://www.ReportAnimalCruelty.com)

Or call  
**(877) 9-HUMANE**



## **The Vermont Humane Federation's Animal Cruelty Response Coalition**

**A state-wide network of professionals coordinating Vermont's efforts to prevent and respond to animal cruelty through communication, education, and training.**

### Members include:

- The VT Humane Federation
- The VT Veterinary Medical Association
- The VT Agency of Agriculture, Food & Markets
- The VT League of Cities & Towns
- The VT Farm Bureau
- The Green Mountain Dairy Farmers Cooperative
- The VT Sheriffs Association
- The VT Police Chiefs Association
- The VT Constables Association
- The VT Animal Control Officers Association
- The VT Agency of Human Services

For more information visit  
[www.vermonthumane.org](http://www.vermonthumane.org)

## **Caring for Rabbits**



### **Vermont's Recommendations and Requirements**

**Sponsored by**



**[www.vermonthumane.org](http://www.vermonthumane.org)**

# Rabbits: The Basics

## Terminology

Female - Doe

Male - Buck

Baby—Kit

## Rabbit Care

- Fresh, clean water should be accessible at all times. Water should be placed in metal or ceramic water containers especially made to hang on the side of the hutch. In the winter, if rabbits are outside, water should be changed often (2-3 times daily) to prevent freezing, and changed daily to avoid contamination.
- Hay is the most important element in a rabbit's diet to keep the digestive track working properly and teeth worn. They should have constant access to dust-free hay. Pet rabbits do not require pellets unless they are underweight. Fruits and carrots can be given at a rate of 1 tablespoon per 2 pounds of body weight daily. Avoid high fat and starchy foods. As a guideline for diet make 85-90% grass hay available at all times, and 10-15% greens. If pellets are fed it should only be 1/8 cup per day and should be high fiber.
- Must have access to pieces of hard wood to gnaw on in order to keep teeth worn down. Dried hard wood branches are good choices as long as they are untreated.

## Shelter

- Although rabbits can live outdoors with proper housing, they should be housed indoors year-round to ensure protection from temperature extremes and predators. Ideal temperature is 60-70 degrees F with good air circulation.
- If they are kept outside they should be provided protection from drafts, rain, direct mid-day sun, and predators.
- Hutches should be elevated off the ground, and provide a solid area for resting, and if wire is used it should be small enough to prevent the rabbit's foot from falling through. Solid surfaces with a litter box are preferable to wire flooring. A "hiding" area/box is also necessary, and should be at least 18 inches off the ground.
- If kept in a basement, a dehumidifier is recommended to avoid damp conditions that may lead to respiratory issues.
- Rabbit housing should be cleaned daily, and large enough for the rabbit to stand upright, stretch out fully and take 3 hops. Minimum should be 3 times the length of the rabbit when fully stretched out.
- Aromatic shavings (cedar, pine) should *not* be used. Recycled paper, hay, wheat-based litters or aspen shavings are some options.

## Additional Recommendations

- Rabbits should have yearly veterinary exams to check for diseases, parasites, and for mal-alignment of teeth and "lumps" of the skin.
- Rabbits need at least 3-4 hours of exercise outside of housing every day. Digging and chewing are natural behaviors, so wires, plants and other hazards should be safeguarded in the play area.
- Rabbits should be spayed or neutered by a veterinarian experienced with rabbit surgeries. This will prevent unwanted litters, spraying in males, and uterine cancer in females. **For information about having your animal spayed or neutered, please call (877) 9-HUMANE.**

# Common Concerns

## Appearance of Animal

Thin; fur in poor condition; sores from scratching; portions of ears missing due to frostbite or fights from overcrowding; obesity; sore hocks; external parasites such as lice and fleas.

## Housing Conditions

Overcrowded conditions; dirty pens and built-up feces; Must be of sufficient space to permit all rabbits (including smaller ones) access to food.

## Behavior

Dull; minimally responsive; not interested in surroundings; depressed; no appetite. Most rabbits are naturally shy of strangers.

If any of the elements above are present, call a veterinarian to examine the animals.

