

# YOUR COMPLETE GUIDE TO SMALL ANIMAL ADOPTION



**KEYS TO A HAPPY AND  
SUCCESSFUL FOREVER HOME**

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# GUINEA PIG CARE GUIDE

## STEPS TO PROPERLY CARE FOR YOUR GUINEA PIG

### PICKING A CAGE

The Humane Society of the United States recommends that a cage for a single guinea pig is at **minimum 36" L x 30" W and 12" high**, but more space is always better! While guinea pigs are social animals and do better in groups, insufficient space can lead to stress, illness, and fighting. Plan to house a pair of pigs.

Many rescues recommend C&C ("cubes and coroplast") cages which can be made yourself and altered in size to suit your needs. Tops aren't needed. Avoid plastic tubs, glass aquariums, and wire-bottom cages: the first two lack ventilation, and wire bottoms can cause painful foot inflammation. Having multiple food bowls, water bottles, hides, etc. helps reduce tension between pigs.

Exercise outside of the cage is not a substitute for an appropriate cage size. **All guinea pigs should come out of their cage to exercise and explore at least once a day.**

### CAGE SETUP

**Fleece** is soft, durable, reusable, and does not retain moisture. To set up your cage, you can layer fleece blankets over an absorbent layer of towels or puppy pee pads.

Consider setting up several 'stations' with separate fleece blankets and towels wherever your guinea pigs spend the most time: by their food dishes, favorite hides, hay stations, etc. This will allow you to clean areas as they become messy. Prepare to spot clean soiled bedding and pick up poop every day with a full in-depth clean using 50/50 vinegar and water mixture once a week.



Guinea pigs should always have access to water bottles or water dishes, unlimited hay, places to hide, wooden things to chew on, and other toys. Hay is best served in floor piles or bins over racks for safety.

### DIET

**A guinea pig's diet should be 80%-90% hay. Fresh hay must always be provided!**



Offer adult guinea pigs an unlimited amount of low-calcium hay, such as timothy hay or orchard grass. Young (less than 6 months old), pregnant, nursing, or ill guinea pigs may benefit from eating alfalfa hay in addition to their regular hay. Hay is needed to wear down the continuously growing teeth of your guinea pig, as well as maintain their gut health. **If guinea pigs do not eat hay throughout the day, they can quickly develop a life-threatening condition called GI stasis.**

Supplement your guinea pig's hay with **fresh vegetables, timothy-based pellets, and fresh water** daily.

When feeding pellets, only give  $\frac{1}{8}$  cup. Look for bags of uniform pellets to avoid picky eating. All pellets should be vitamin C fortified to prevent scurvy! If you want to add your own vitamin C, put supplements in food, not water. Vitamin C breaks down rapidly in water and only lasts 6 weeks - 3 months in food.

**Offer  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup of leafy greens and veggies per 1 pound of body weight** (most adult pigs will get  $\frac{3}{4}$  cup – 1 cup total). Limit fruits to special treats and avoid carbohydrates like grains and seeds entirely.

Leafy Greens (85%-90% of daily salad)			Veggies (10%-15% of daily salad)	
Daily	2-4x / week	1-2x / week	Daily	2-4x / week
Butter lettuce	Arugula	Basil ( $\frac{1}{8}$ cup)	Carrot ( $\frac{2}{3}$ in. slice)	Bell pepper - red
Green leaf lettuce	Chicory greens	Collard greens	Cherry tomato (1)	Green beans (1-2)
Red leaf lettuce	Dandelion greens	Dill ( $\frac{1}{8}$ cup)	Bell pepper – green ( $\frac{1}{8}$ slice)	Artichoke
Romaine lettuce	Garden cress	Kale	Bell pepper – yellow ( $\frac{1}{8}$ slice)	Celery
Endive	Parsley ( $\frac{1}{8}$ cup)	Mustard greens	Radicchio	Cucumber
Cilantro ( $\frac{1}{8}$ cup)		Spinach	Zucchini	Peas in pods (1-2)
Spring mix		Rosemary ( $\frac{1}{8}$ cup)		Yellow squash
		Carrot Top Greens		Butternut squash

\*Most brassicas (broccoli, Brussels sprouts, cabbages, cauliflower) can cause gas and bloating.

## ENRICHMENT

A guinea pig with an active mind and body is a **healthier, happier pet**. Enrichment comes in many forms, and not all guinea pigs will like every form of enrichment, so have fun trialing things!

You can encourage a guinea pig to forage for food by scattering food around their enclosure or putting it inside chew-safe cardboard boxes, paper parcels, tunnels, and cup toys! You can build an obstacle course out of materials like cardboard for your guinea pig to navigate and explore. If a guinea pig really likes a certain treat, you can even try trick training, or play 'chase' with the treat tied to a string! Most pigs enjoy running around, napping in hides, tunneling, and another pig's company more than anything. Rotate out cage objects and toys when you clean to keep things fresh.



## GROOMING



A short-coated guinea pig may not need to be brushed, but a long-haired one will need to be combed daily and trimmed when too long. Regular grooming gives you the opportunity to look your guinea pig over for parasites, lumps, scabs, or other concerns. Most guinea pigs will not need to be bathed unless they sit in urine or feces. If this happens, you can perform a “butt bath” with an inch or two of warm water and non-medicated, mild shampoo. Dry thoroughly.

Male guinea pigs have a perianal sac that can collect hay, fur, or other debris. If this area is dirty, it can be cleaned with a cotton swab and mineral oil, coconut oil, or guinea pig-safe shampoo and warm water. This is called boar cleaning. Plan to check this area weekly. Some guinea pigs, like seniors, need more help—others need less.

Nails must be clipped at least once a month. Be careful not to cut into the red-pink blood supply called the quick! If the nail bleeds, use styptic powder and apply pressure until it stops. Guinea pigs can be persuaded to sit still for their nail trims by offering tasty snacks. **Don't worry if you can only do a few nails at a time: a low stress, fun trim is the most important thing!**

## VET VISITS

Guinea pigs are prey animals, so they hide signs of illness. **You must keep a watchful eye to ensure your guinea pig is eating, drinking, urinating, and defecating regularly.** Weekly weigh-ins using a kitchen scale can help identify health issues early. It is better to be safe than sorry, so don't be afraid to call your vet. Painful guinea pigs often hunch up, fluff out, and lose appetite.

Your guinea pig can get yearly exams to check their ears, eyes, teeth, and gut. It's best to find a “cavy-savvy” vet that specializes in caring for pocket pets and their particular needs!



**Please visit page 17** of this guide for a list of several local veterinary offices that treat small animals.

For additional resources, please visit [www.ycspca.org/adoption-resources](http://www.ycspca.org/adoption-resources)

# HAMSTER CARE GUIDE

## STEPS TO PROPERLY CARE FOR YOUR HAMSTER

### PICKING A CAGE

The ideal hamster home is **as big as you can make it**, full of deep bedding (6-10"+) to burrow in and lots of enrichment. They prefer it cluttered!

House all hamsters of any species **solitary**.

Wire-top cages with solid plastic bottoms or aquarium tanks with wire lids are best. Minimum floor space is often cited as 450 sq. inches, the same as a 20 gallon long tank. A longer cage is preferred over a tall one. As a bonus, bigger cages fit more fun activities for your hamster and do not need to be cleaned as often!

Try to avoid module cages with lots of tubes, as these are harder to clean and hamsters can chew the plastic or become stuck in the tubes. For an affordable option, you can convert a large storage tub with wire lid into a hamster home!

### CAGE SETUP

Hamsters are most active overnight, so their cages should provide everything they need to stay busy while you're asleep.

Every hamster habitat should have deep bedding to nest and burrow in, a solid (not wire) exercise wheel, hide boxes, food, a water bottle, and plenty of toys to chew, climb, and explore. Bedding can be made of unscented paper, hemp, aspen, or spruce, and will need fluffing up periodically.



Wheels must be 10-12" in diameter to prevent injury—large enough the hamster's back doesn't curve while running on it. Some safe chew options include natural wood, grass balls, unsalted walnut shell, cork logs, pine cones, cardboard, lava rock, and hard Whimzees dog chews! Experiment to see what your hamster likes best, but offer a variety.

### DIET

Hamsters are omnivores and require diversity in their diet.

Feeding a combination of **lab block and seed mix** is recommended. Lab blocks are nutritionally complete but "boring" to the hamster, whereas seed mixes are natural and exciting but a picky hamster can choose which parts to eat and ignore the rest. Remember that Syrians and dwarves are different species and need different mixes.



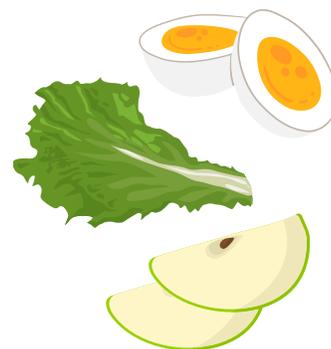
Consider serving some or all of your hamster's food in the forage or 'scatter' style by spreading it around the cage and hiding pieces for your hamster to find. This more closely mimics their natural feeding behavior and keeps their mind and body active! Hamsters will appreciate small amounts of extra protein, vegetables, and fruits in addition to their seeds and pellet.

**Seed mix (1-2 tbsp every other day):** more cereals and grain for Syrians, more small seeds and no added sugar for dwarves

**Protein (½ tsp twice a week):** scrambled or hard-boiled egg, plain cooked poultry, dried mealworms or crickets

**Vegetables (two nickel-sized pieces every other day):** romaine lettuce, kale, spinach, cabbage, broccoli, cauliflower, green beans, peas, squash

**Fruit (¼ tsp once or twice a week):** apple, pear, banana, blueberry, strawberry, peach, melons



## CLEANING

Hamsters are **organized animals** and prefer to pick one spot to do the majority of their business

Remove spots of soiled bedding and droppings daily. Expect to replace all soiled bedding with fresh bedding every week or so depending on the size of the enclosure. The entire cage should receive a thorough clean once a month with mild soap and water or diluted vinegar. Hamsters have very sensitive respiratory systems and cannot handle most commercial cleaning products, so be sure to **pick something gentle** and **allow the cage to dry completely** before moving the hamster back in.



## HANDLING

Do not wake up your hamster while they're sleeping to play—they may startle and bite. Wait until the **evening hours** for your hamster to become active before handling.



When lifting a hamster, cup your hands on either side of their body and scoop. Always keep a hand under them to support their hind end. Go slow with your new hamster to build trust. If you want your hamster to enjoy time with you as much as you enjoy them, respect their space and don't force them. Adding some tasty treats into your handling sessions won't hurt either!

## VET VISITS

A number of common health issues can be prevented by **reducing stress** on your hamster and providing **proper husbandry**. Short bouts of diarrhea can be caused by overfeeding vegetables and fruits, so take care to introduce new food slowly and keep portions small. If you are sick, avoid handling your hamster, as they can catch some illnesses from us! Watch out for signs of respiratory sickness like sneezing, clicking, heavy breathing, runny eyes and nose, and general unwellness. Pay attention to your hamster's energy level and appetite. As your hamster ages, they are more likely to develop tumors, much like people.

**Always check with a small animal vet if you're concerned about any changes in appearance or behavior.**

Please visit **page 17** of this guide for a list of several local veterinary offices that treat small animals.

For additional resources, please visit [www.ycspca.org/adoption-resources](http://www.ycspca.org/adoption-resources)

# FERRET CARE GUIDE

## STEPS TO PROPERLY CARE FOR YOUR FERRET

### PICKING A CAGE

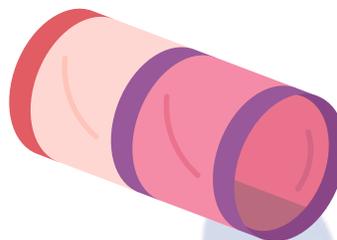
Ferrets sleep for **14-18 hours a day** so they can play even harder when awake! For multiple ferrets, the ideal cage is at least 35" L x 25" W x 55" H. A solo ferret can go smaller, but should still be in a cage size 30" L x 18" W x 18" H at minimum. Cages must be well-ventilated with solid bottoms. Multiple levels are a plus as long as the gap between levels is not too steep for a ferret to safely climb! Keep bar spacing to 1 inch (2.5 cm) or less apart to prevent escapes and injuries.

**All ferrets should be out of their cage in a ferret-proof space for 2-4 hours a day** (as much as possible is best!) for their health and happiness, but your ferret will be safest in their cage when you are out of the house, asleep, or during emergencies, so it's important for the cage to be comfortable and large enough to hold necessities when needed.

### CAGE SETUP

Ferrets are naturally clean animals, but they don't always conform to our ideas. For litter boxes, ferrets prefer to use the bathroom in **corners**, so keep that in mind when selecting your box sizes and shapes. You will likely need multiple for time outside the cage, as ferrets have fast digestive systems and need to go often. Litter boxes should be filled with paper pellets or other paper-based beddings.

In the rest of the cage, feel free to use a variety of fleece hammocks, tunnels, beds, and blankets. Be sure to cover all wire bottoms if you have any. Prepare to spot clean soiled bedding and pick up poop every day with a full in-depth clean using 50/50 vinegar and water at least once a week.



Most ferrets should free-feed (unless they prove otherwise!) so keep a bowl with kibble available at all times for "grazing", as well as a water bowl. You can use both a bowl and a bottle, but having a bottle alone is not recommended as they can discourage drinking and damage teeth in ferrets.

### DIET

Ferrets are obligate carnivores, meaning **they must eat meat**. Their ideal diet is meat-based, **high in protein** (>35-40%), **high in fat** (18-20%), and **low in fiber and carbs** (<5%).

While ferrets can eat high quality kitten food in a pinch, long-term use can lead to nutritional deficiencies, as most cat foods do not fulfill the specific dietary needs of ferrets.



A ferret-specific wet, dry, or freeze-dried raw food can be paired with treats such as salmon paste, eggs (boiled, scrambled, or raw), grain-free dried meat pet treats, or little bits of unseasoned cooked or raw meat. Ferrets should avoid dairy, grains, fruits, and vegetables, as they're unable to digest them. A high carb diet is thought to be the leading cause of insulinoma—pancreatic tumors that cause dangerously low blood sugar episodes.

## ENRICHMENT

A ferret with an active mind and body is a **healthier, happier pet**. Enrichment comes in many forms, and not all ferrets will like every form of enrichment, so have fun trialing things!

Ferrets love digging, so providing a dig box can help protect your floors! Put long grain white rice, macaroni, beans, play sand, shredded paper, ping pong balls, plastic eggs, or potting soil in a box deep enough to dig in. You can hide treats or toys inside to reward them for digging in the right spot! Avoid foam, plastic, and rubber with big chewers.

You can encourage a ferret to use their nose and forage by scattering food around their enclosure or putting it inside chew-safe cardboard boxes, paper parcels, tunnels, and cup toys! You can build (or buy) an obstacle course out of materials like cardboard for your ferret to navigate. Some ferrets enjoy playing rough with stuffed animals or fleece blankets that are dragged on the floor. If a ferret really likes a certain treat, you can even try trick training! Rotate out a couple cage objects when you clean to keep things fresh, and enjoy learning your ferret's favorites.



## GROOMING

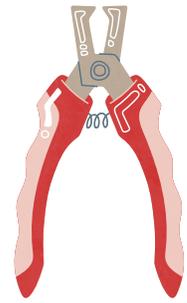
The musky smell of a ferret is infamous, but contrary to expectations, the best way to reduce the smell is by **washing the bedding, not the ferret**. Even descented ferrets produce skin oils that give them their ferrety smell.

Bathing strips the skin of its natural oils and causes the body to create even more, making it useless for reducing smell. Vets recommend bathing 3-4 times a year at most.

If a ferret gets truly dirty, they can be bathed with ferret-safe shampoo or soaked oatmeal in a bath that's 101–103 °Fahrenheit (38.3–39.4°C) and with water that comes up to chest-height.



Nails typically need to be clipped every 2-3 weeks in ferrets, with front claws growing faster than back. Be careful not to cut into the red-pink blood supply called the quick! If the nail bleeds, use styptic powder and apply pressure until it stops. Try putting a fish oil or salmon paste on their stomach to keep them busy licking while trimming. Alternatively, a helper can scruff and support the body while you focus on your trim. Don't worry if you can only do a few nails at a time: **a low stress, fun trim is the most important thing!**



## VET VISITS

Keep a watchful eye to ensure your ferret is eating, drinking, urinating, and defecating regularly, as well as maintaining their weight and coat. In addition, ferrets need rabies vaccines and should go yearly for an annual exam and booster. The most common major health issues in ferrets as they age and their warning signs are:

1. **Insulinoma** - drooling, pawing at the mouth, lethargy, weakness in the hind legs, incoordination, and seizures. Symptoms improve around meals and worsen in-between
2. **Adrenal gland disease** - hair loss starting at the tail and moving up, itchy skin, aggression, increased thirst and urination, an enlarged abdomen, and swelling of the genitals in females
3. **Lymphoma** - poor appetite, weight loss, lethargy, diarrhea, coughing, labored breathing, swollen lymph nodes, and more
4. **Foreign bodies** - anorexia, vomiting, lethargy, diarrhea, and progressive weight loss



**It's best to find a vet that specializes in caring for exotics and their particular needs!**

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# RAT & MOUSE CARE GUIDE

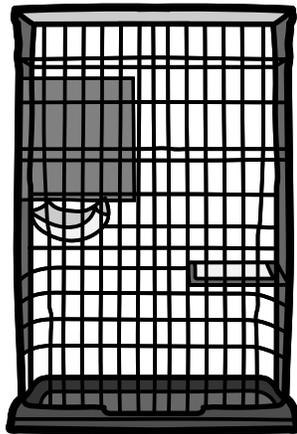
## STEPS TO PROPERLY CARE FOR YOUR RAT OR MOUSE

### PICKING A CAGE

#### RATS

While rats are social animals and do better in groups, insufficient space can lead to stress, illness, and fighting. Floorspace is most important, but rats will make use of vertical space if provided!

The general rule of thumb is 8 cubic feet for a pair of rats and 2-2.5 more for each rat over that, which means a minimum cage of 18" x 15" x 12.5" for a single rat or 31.5" x 19.7" x 31.5" for a pair, but **more space is always better!**

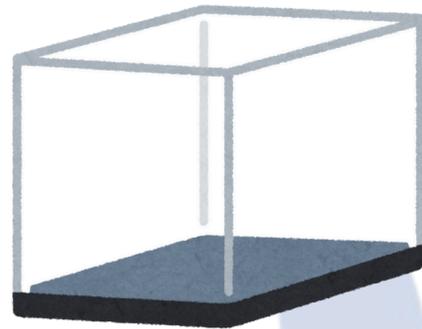


Avoid plastic tubs, glass aquariums, and uncovered wire-bottom cages: the first two lack ventilation, and wire bottoms can cause painful foot inflammation called bumblefoot. Rats can chew through non-metal materials to escape, and may fit through bars that are spaced further apart than 0.4 - 0.6 inches.

#### MICE

As long as there is a mesh lid for ventilation, aquarium or vivarium tanks can be good options for mice. A single male should be in a 10 gallon minimum, but females (who live in small groups) would be better suited for a 20 gallon long or 30 gallon tank.

Neutered males can be housed with females or with small numbers of other neutered males, but **intact males cannot be housed together**. If you aren't sure if you have enough space, a group size of 3 is considered preferred. Like rats, mice can chew through plastic to escape and require bar spacing less than 0.3 inches apart if you purchase a barred cage or topper.



### WHAT TO INCLUDE

#### RATS

**Layer fleece over any flooring**, especially if there is wire. Fleece is soft, durable, reusable, and does not retain moisture. Include hides, hammocks, tubes, ropes, edible chew toys, mineral blocks, food dishes, water bowls and/or bottles, and a wheel of 12"+ in diameter, with larger rats needing larger wheels. To know if your wheel is big enough, check if the rat's back is straight while on it.





Prepare to spot clean soiled bedding and pick up poop every day with a full in-depth clean using 50/50 vinegar and water **at least once a week** for rats. Rodents have sensitive respiratory systems, so avoid most cleaners.

## MICE



Mice should have soft bedding to burrow in, with 2-3 inches of depth being preferred. Aspen wood shavings or paper-based beddings are safe, while softwoods like pine or cedar are toxic. Mice prefer cluttered cages, so offer plenty of hides, fiber mats for climbing and chewing, (mouse safe) ropes, hanging hutches and coconuts, ladders, shreds, and toys. Any wheels should be 8"+ in diameter.

All rodents need wooden chews to keep their teeth trimmed. Prepare to spot clean soiled bedding and pick up poop every day with a full in-depth clean using 50/50 vinegar and water whenever the cage starts to smell for mice. Mice will stress out with overcleaning, so larger tanks with deeper bedding can go farther between cleanings. You can add some of their used bedding back into the clean cage to give them a comforting scent.

## DIET

A **Rat's** diet should be 75-80% lab blocks. Though it seems boring, these uniform pellets are nutritionally complete and will not allow your new pet to pick out just the pieces they like best. You can supplement their diet with 1-2 teaspoons total of fresh fruits, vegetables, and grain mix each day.

**Mice** can be fed lab block or a combination of various seed mixes made for mice, but make sure any seed mixes are nutritionally complete and contain around 16% protein, 18% fiber, and 4% fat.



You can scatter snacks around the cage for your rat or mouse to find instead of feeding in dishes, which doubles as enrichment! Be sure to look up whether the fresh foods you want to offer are safe to give before offering them to your pet.

## ENRICHMENT

### RATS

Rats are quite intelligent and social and benefit from having **an hour** of out of their cage time **every day**.

You can create a rat-safe playpen with things to do or spend some time cuddling on the couch. You can encourage a rat to forage by scattering food around their enclosure or putting it inside chew-safe cardboard boxes, paper parcels, tunnels, and cup toys! You can build an obstacle course out of materials like cardboard or random objects for your rat to navigate. If a rat really likes a certain treat, you can try trick training, or play 'chase' with the treat tied to a string!



## MICE

Some mice enjoy exploring, while others prefer to stay in the safety of their cage. You can practice hand feeding and holding your mice in their enclosure, then bring them out in a safe space to climb around on you. Mice who do enjoy coming out can spend supervised time in pop-up playpens full of new things to chew on, hide under, and climb on.



## GROOMING

Rats and mice are both naturally clean animals who will bathe themselves like cats do. You should still look your pet over for parasites, lumps, scabs, or other concerns regularly during interactions. If there is a medical reason to bathe a rat or mouse, consider wiping them down with unscented baby wipes or damp washcloths. Neither animal should need regular nail trims, as their nails wear down while going about their usual business.

## VET VISITS

Rats and mice are prey animals, and so their natural instinct is to hide any symptoms of illness. You should keep a watchful eye to ensure your pet is eating, drinking, defecating, and urinating regularly, and take note of any behavior changes



An unwell rat or mouse might sit in a hunched up posture with squinting eyes and an unkempt coat, or they may have noisy breathing that indicates a respiratory infection. Both pets can get yearly exams to check their ears, eyes, teeth, and general health, but do not need vaccines. Other than respiratory infections, both rats and mice are most prone to cancer in their older years, so keep an eye out for bumps or weight changes.

**It's best to find a vet that specializes in caring for pocket pets and their particular needs!**

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# RABBIT CARE GUIDE

## STEPS TO PROPERLY CARE FOR YOUR RABBIT

### CHOOSING THE RIGHT ENCLOSURE

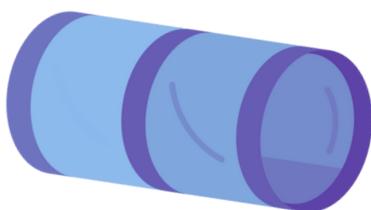
Rabbits need much more space than a traditional cage can offer. A **large puppy exercise pen (x-pen)** is an ideal option, as it gives your rabbit room to hop, stretch, and play safely indoors.

The enclosure should provide at least 16–24 square feet of space, with extra time each day for supervised exercise outside of it. Keep your rabbit indoors—this protects them from predators, parasites, and extreme temperatures. The floor should be solid and covered with rugs, mats, or blankets for comfort and to prevent sore feet. Avoid wire-bottom cages, as they can cause painful injuries.



### ENCLOSURE SETUP

Inside the pen, include everything your rabbit needs to feel comfortable and secure. Provide a litter box with rabbit-safe litter, unlimited hay (in a pile or litter box), sturdy water bowl and/or bottle, and food dishes. Add toys, tunnels, natural chew items for enrichment, and a hideout where your rabbit can rest and feel safe.

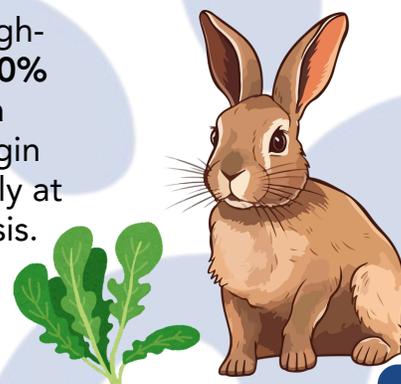


Many rabbits also enjoy time outside their pen in a bunny-proofed area—be sure to cover wires, block off small spaces, and remove anything they could chew or ingest. A clean, spacious, and enriching setup will help your rabbit stay **happy, healthy, and bonded** with their new family.

### DIET

Feeding your rabbit starts with giving unlimited access to high-quality grass hay every day—**this should make up around 80% of an adult rabbit's diet**. For rabbits under a year, offer a mixture of timothy hay or meadow grass and alfalfa hay. Begin decreasing alfalfa hay at 7 months and take it away completely at one year. Rabbits must eat and digest often to avoid GI stasis.

Supplement your rabbit's hay with **fresh vegetables, timothy-based pellets, and fresh water** daily.



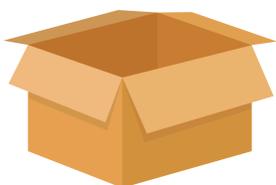
Use a good quality, high-fiber timothy-based pellet to supplement your rabbit's diet. Pellets should be fresh and relatively high in fiber (18% minimum). Avoid "gourmet" pellets that contain nuts, seeds, or grains. Only feed 1/8-1/4 cup per 5 lbs. of body weight —pellets are too soft to wear down your rabbit's molars, which is natural and needed!

Rabbits love fresh vegetables, especially leafy greens. A good rule of thumb is 1 cup of packed greens for every two (2) lbs. of body weight. Select at least three types of vegetables per daily meal to provide a variety of nutrients. When trying out new greens, add the new veg one at a time and monitor for stomach upset.

Leafy Greens (75% daily salad)		Vegetables (25% daily salad)		
Daily	2-4x / week	Daily	2-4x / week	1-2x / week
Arugula	Kale	Celery	Brussel Sprouts	Sweet Peppers (Red/Orange)
Basil	Beet Greens	Bell Peppers (any color)	Green Beans	Beets
Cilantro	Mustard Greens	Zucchini	Parsnips	Pumpkin
Cucumber Leaves	Swiss Chard	Cucumber	Summer or Yellow Squash	Carrot Roots
Lettuce	Collard Greens	Broccoli Stems	Radish Tops	
Watercress	Broccoli Leaves			
Dandelion Greens				

## ENRICHMENT

Rabbits are intelligent, curious animals that need daily **mental and physical stimulation** to stay **happy and healthy**. In the wild, they spend much of their day exploring, digging, chewing, and foraging — so it's important to recreate these activities in the home.



Provide a variety of toys such as willow balls, cardboard boxes, paper towel rolls stuffed with hay, and untreated wood blocks for chewing. Dig boxes filled with shredded paper, soil, or hay allow natural digging behavior, and tunnels or hideouts give them places to explore and feel secure. Use digestible (non-plastic) materials for safety and rotate toys often. Scatter feeding or hiding small portions of vegetables and pellets around their space encourages natural foraging instincts. Rabbits are social—gentle petting, training with treats, or supervised playtime outside their pen help strengthen your bond.

A rabbit with plenty of enrichment will be more relaxed, less destructive, and a joy to have as part of the family.

## GROOMING

Regular grooming is an important part of keeping your rabbit healthy and comfortable.

Rabbits shed year-round, with heavier molts a few times each year, so brushing helps remove loose fur and prevents hair from being swallowed during self-grooming — which can lead to dangerous blockages. Short-haired rabbits should be brushed at least once a week, while long-haired breeds may need daily attention to prevent mats and tangles. Use a soft-bristle brush or grooming comb designed for small animals, and always handle your rabbit gently to make it a positive experience.

Rabbits do not need baths and should **never be submerged in water**, as it can cause severe stress and even shock. Instead, use a damp cloth to spot-clean dirty areas if needed. Never put rabbits on their backs!

Check your rabbit's nails every few weeks and trim them as necessary to prevent overgrowth and discomfort. While grooming, take the opportunity to gently check their body for any lumps, sores, or signs of parasites. Regular grooming not only keeps your rabbit looking great — it also helps you build trust and catch early signs of health issues.



## VET VISITS

An annual wellness exam helps ensure your rabbit stays healthy, allows early detection of dental or digestive issues, and gives you a chance to discuss diet, housing, and behavior with an experienced professional.

Because rabbits are prey animals, they often hide signs of illness until they're very sick, so it's important to **watch closely for subtle changes in appetite, droppings, or activity** and seek veterinary care right away if anything seems off. In some areas, vaccines may be recommended for viruses like RHDV2, which is highly fatal and contagious.

Spaying or neutering is highly recommended to prevent common cancers, reduce hormone-driven behaviors, and help with bonding.



**Please visit page 17** of this guide for a list of several local veterinary offices that treat small animals.

For additional resources, please visit [www.ycspca.org/adoption-resources](http://www.ycspca.org/adoption-resources)

## LOCAL VETERINARIAN OFFICES THAT CARE FOR SMALL ANIMALS

### **Ani-Care Animal Hospital**

717-741-1320

2740 S Queen St, Dallastown, PA 17313

### **East York Veterinary Center**

717-840-1025

1997 Industrial Highway, York, PA 17402

### **Good Hope Animal Hospital**

717-766-5535

6108 Carlise Pike #120,  
Mechanicsburg, PA 17050

### **Patton Veterinary Hospital**

717-296-2208

425 E. Broadway  
Red Lion, PA 17356

### **Shiloh Veterinary Hospital**

717-767-0180

110 Morgan Ln, York, PA 17406

### **Yorkshire Animal Hospital**

717-755-4935

3434 E. Market St, York, PA 17402

*Please note, there may be additional practices that care for these pets, this list is by no means exhaustive.*

For additional resources, please visit [www.ycspca.org/adoption-resources](http://www.ycspca.org/adoption-resources)